

137724


LOCAL COLLECTION

L 941.25
W33 AN4.

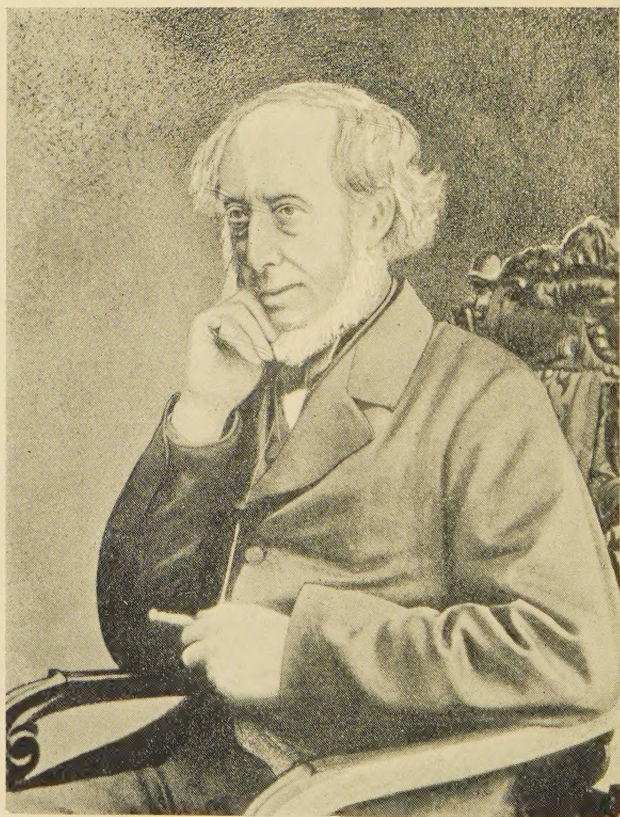
137724 4/16.75

LOCAL COLLECTION

SHERIFF WATSON
OF ABERDEEN



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation



Sheriff WATSON.

SHERIFF WATSON

OF

ABERDEEN:

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE, AND HIS
WORK FOR THE YOUNG.

BY

HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER,
MARION ANGUS.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

G. M. FRASER, Librarian, Public Library, Aberdeen.

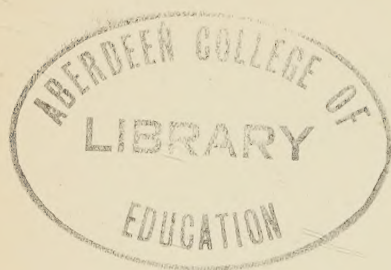
ABERDEEN:

THE DAILY JOURNAL.

D. WYLLIE & SON.

1913.

Scotland
419186



CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii.
CHAPTER I.	1
CHAPTER II.	5
CHAPTER III.	11
CHAPTER IV.	17
CHAPTER V.	27
CHAPTER VI.	38
CHAPTER VII.	48
CHAPTER VIII.	57
CHAPTER IX.	67
CHAPTER X.	74
CHAPTER XI.	85
INDEX	97

INTRODUCTION

THIS admirable memoir of Sheriff Watson needs really no introduction. It is, in the main, its own interpretation, alike in its presentation of the personality of William Watson, and in its vivid embodiment of the story of his extra-official labours in behalf, more particularly, of the neglected young people of this and other cities. But it has been felt that, as a kind of background, something might be said by way of introduction of the conditions of life in Aberdeen in Sheriff Watson's time—in his earlier days in the town, especially.

William Watson was the first outsider, after centuries of the office, to be appointed a sheriff-substitute in Aberdeen (see Dr. Littlejohn, II., 127). He came, in 1829, immediately after Dr. Alex. Dauney, who had identified himself in a very acceptable way with the life of the community, and so it was not easy for an outsider to follow him—especially in Aberdeen. For this district, for many long years, had lived a peculiarly insular, self-contained life. Means of intercourse with the outside world were few and inconvenient. The town, till recently before Sheriff Watson's coming, was small—in 1800 the population was still under 30,000; there was little enterprise in any direction, for habits were deeply rooted, the character

of the townsfolk was strongly marked, and the manner of thought was dull, and narrow, and cramped like the physical conditions, unless when touched, on occasion, by living, disrupting influence from without. Even as expressed in the speech of the time, of all classes, this was apparent, for the Aberdeen speech was still, in the main, the homely dialect of the old Northumbria of the middle centuries, long surpassed in the educated language of its own home, and now, so far as this part of Scotland is concerned, only to be found in the humbler, more intimate colloquial speech of town and rural parts.

But in 1829, when William Watson came north, Aberdeen was beginning to emerge from its bonds in various ways. He arrived to find the town expanding far beyond its ancient limits, for by the great scheme of cutting through St. Katharine's Hill and bridging the Denburn Valley, with all that was attendant thereupon, the town was spreading in many directions, and the population had risen in 1829 to well over 50,000. He found, too, the community torn by wholesome dissension over the matter of Parliamentary and Municipal reform. For thirty years Aberdeen, strange to say, had harboured a group of intensely keen reformers, men of no great standing socially or individually, but inspired by a missionary zeal, and tireless, who carried the spirit of the new time into other towns besides their own—into Edinburgh, no less.

And to us it seems almost incredible how difficult it was

to make impression on the old prejudices in these as in other things. In the second chapter of this memoir a very significant passage is quoted from Sheriff Watson as to how immovable good men were in regard to such a thing even as proper provision for the poor. This was in 1840, when ideas for legislation were in the air. Gordon, of Craig, at one meeting, "called Mr. Allison an enthusiast, a bigot, a man of little experience. The laws relating to the poor were all-sufficient without investigation; the administration of the laws in Scotland was perfect." And so on. Even Thomson of Banchory, supposed to be a specially enlightened and compassionate man, at the same meeting "contended that the poor were in the spirit of the Gospel liberally supplied by voluntary charity—that the Gospel precept was violated by the imposition of a compulsory assessment."

Then the Reform agitation had scarcely died away when the great ecclesiastical controversy which culminated in the Disruption broke out. As this memoir says, it shook the spiritual life of Scotland to its foundations. In Aberdeen the strife was general, and extremely bitter, so that we find even in charitable movements Free Church ladies and Established Church ladies falling out, and rival organisations called into being in consequence. Sheriff Watson was clearly with the "Non-Intrusions" — a name that needs some explanation nowadays—but one can see that he had a wonderfully clear perception of the essentials of the case.

He was well aware, doubtless, that the religious divisions, after all, were not vital, and that the development of true Christian character had never failed in any section of the Church.

Sheriff Watson was debarred, naturally, by his position from taking part in either the political or ecclesiastical controversies of his time ; but there were other spheres in which his interests had free scope. Among the well-to-do classes, from his earliest days in the town, there was much social enjoyment. Lord Cockburn tells us how it was of a very homely character sometimes, as when on one occasion the Provost's wife sent her " lass " to the Barracks and invited all the officers to come down to dinner that evening to meet the Circuit judges. And they all came—without condescension, let us hope—and a very merry and happy evening they made of it. Then in this book we get a glimpse of convivial associations in such a club, for example, as the Philosophical Society, which, in the thirties, held its meetings in the Lemon Tree Inn. That kind of thing was a feature of the time, and few leading Aberdonians of the middle of the century but were connected with certain of these convivial clubs. Sheriff Watson seems to have been able to take the best out of the practice, in a detached kind of way.

One cannot but be amused a little at the Sheriff's serious interest in such a subject as phrenology, which comes out occasionally from his early days in Edinburgh.

But that was in the air—very much so in Aberdeen in the middle of the century. It began about the time of George Coombe's visit to the town, in 1836, when he found it impossible to obtain a hall for lectures on the hated subject. But a society was started, and flourished, which ultimately had its museum and library, and a librarian, if you please, and Professor Gregory did not scorn to become president of the organisation. We remember, too, that one of the keener spirits was William Thom, the Inverurie poet, who appears in these pages in just the right connection—associated with Sheriff Watson in an appeal through the columns of his friendly *Herald* on behalf of the neglected children of Aberdeen.

For, after all, Sheriff Watson is remembered in Aberdeen and elsewhere for his remarkably successful work in behalf of the young. "The Children's Sheriff" was the name that was often applied to him in later years. He had in his heart throughout life a great love of children, and when he began his official life in the north the children of the poor were still, in general, in a state of degradation worthy only of a pagan community. In this, as in other respects, there was an appalling lack of vision. It is true that some effort had already been made at better things. Although Sheriff Watson probably was not aware of it, his were not quite the first industrial schools in Aberdeen. Twenty years before his time a female industrial school was carried on—under that name, too—in Chronicle Lane, but the work had been

partial and superficial, and, on the whole, futile. Neither the conscience nor the imagination of the community had been touched, and it was in achieving that most necessary end, inspired by a high and clear ideal, that Sheriff Watson found the opening of the way for such a really notable advance as he attained in the treatment of neglected children.

It will be seen from the unfolding of the narrative in this book that Sheriff Watson was not clear from the beginning as to the precise methods to be followed. He attempted to work at first by voluntary means, and he found these hopelessly inadequate. How difficult the problem was, even in a comparatively small town like Aberdeen, is shown by the fact that on the first morning after the Magistrates had agreed to his suggestion to operate through the police, no fewer than sixty-five children were apprehended for begging in the streets of the town.

Now, this book is in no sense an apology for industrial schools, even in the section of Sheriff Watson's life where that subject specially engages attention. We see well enough now, after half a century, serious defects in the system — inherent defects, affecting alike the individual character of the inmates and their industrial independence in after life. But the industrial schools of Sheriff Watson's day were an immense advance on former conditions, and the movement had its value very much in the impetus and direction it gave to public ideas on the question of the proper care and education of the young. This book very

graphically brings out how the Industrial Schools movement soon spread far beyond Aberdeen. Sheriff Watson was in request to explain his scheme and methods all over the country, and thus similar schools sprang up in Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Birmingham, Belfast, and in other towns. After his official work was done, and he had left Aberdeen for the scenes of earlier days, Sheriff Watson found much comfort, we believe, in visiting these numerous institutions, where he would be received with the reverence due to a father and a pioneer.

One can see very well from this record of his life that Sheriff Watson must have been a man of a peculiarly fine type of character. That is apparent, indeed, apart from everything else, in his great love of children and in his untiring efforts in their interest. It must have given great enlightenment to his life. He had his full share of the agony of sorrow, but in his case it did not destroy but sweetened character, so that at the last we find him still giving out to others of the bounties of his own affection and experience, and moving quietly towards the shades in an atmosphere of grace and peace. Aberdeen was much the better for having Sheriff Watson as one of its citizens, and it will be helpful for us all to read this quiet, beautiful story of his life.

G. M. FRASER.

ABERDEEN, *July*, 1913.

Sheriff Watson of Aberdeen

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

Early days in Lanarkshire—A kirk with the “jougs”—Poaching a century ago—Primitive hunting customs—Fears of French invasion—Jenner and vaccination—Applying the “Lee Penny” for whooping cough.

WILLIAM WATSON was born on the 5th of April, 1796, one of a family of eight children, sons and daughters, descendants of a long line of small proprietors—sheep farmers in a high semi-moorland district of Lanarkshire.

Long afterwards he wrote of his father and mother in this wise:—

“I had the happiness to have the best of fathers. He was ‘an honest man, the noblest work of God.’

“I believe him never to have intentionally defrauded anyone. In all his dealings, if he wronged anyone, he wronged himself; for in selling a horse or a cow, he was always careful to tell its faults, leaving the buyer to discover its good qualities. An affectionate husband and an

indulgent father, he leant perhaps a little too much on his wife. A kind master, he was perhaps a little too blind to the faults of his servants.

“ My mother was very handsome when young, and very dignified looking in old age. She had more spirit than my father, and held her children and servants more in check than he did; but she had the most loving and affectionate nature that a woman could possess.”

Carnwath was the nearest town to the Westoun (the Watson farm). The kirk was an old building with nothing remarkable about it save the “ jogs,” which hung beside the principal entrance. The use of them had been given up before the days when the sturdy sons and daughters of Watson of Westoun filled the deep, square pew on Sundays.

The minister is reported to have said that these instruments had proved so effective in the past that his was now the most moral and religious parish in Scotland. No theft had been committed during his long ministry. There was not a public house in the village. The parish schoolmaster was the only drunkard, and but one illegitimate child had been born.

Poaching was common, but it was not thought a crime to shoot a moor cock or a hare if enough were left to afford Lord Elphinston sport.

It was not the custom to let game. Everyone who had a riding horse hunted with the laird, and those who had none travelled on foot.

As soon as the cry of the hounds was heard at the school, it was the signal for the school to be dismissed, and all the boys joined in the hunt.

Thrice happy days!

These were the exciting years of the Napoleonic wars, and a warlike spirit prevailed throughout the country. Everyone who could carry a musket and keep the step was a volunteer.

Watson of Westoun was a lieutenant of his company, and his young son William used to look out every morning to see if the enemy were not crossing the Black Mount. An invasion was threatened, and fully expected, and the boy, although he never confessed it, was really in a state of constant alarm. This feeling, however, completely disappeared when one day he was taken to see a review of volunteers at Lanark. "The sight," said he, "of so many men able to fight quite restored my confidence, and henceforth Napoleon and his troops had no terrors for me."

Jenner was at this time proclaiming to an unbelieving world the virtues of vaccination in preventing the ravages of smallpox that at this time was a terrible scourge.

William was the last member of the family to be inoculated. His father must have been of a more open mind towards new discoveries than many of his generation, for it was not until several years later that the London doctors declared their confidence in Jenner's method.

But the past had its hold on the Lanarkshire farmer.

He still retained his belief in the "Lee Penny," and sent his son to be cured by it of the whooping cough.

This mysterious coin was in possession by inheritance of his wife's brother, John Stodart of Lee. It used to be taken, with great solemnity, from its strong box and dipped nine times in a tumbler full of water. The which water, being drunk by the patient as quickly as possible, so as to prevent any escape of its talismanic virtues, immediately and completely cured the patient.

CHAPTER II.

EDINBURGH.

From the Lanarkshire moors to Edinburgh—The High School—
Fears of body-snatching—Apprentice W.S.—At the play—
The novels of Walter Scott—Waterloo and the peace—Miss
Grahame and Lord Jeffrey—Society manners in the capital—
William Watson, W.S.

IN 1808 William was sent to Edinburgh to complete his education. It must have been an important event in his young life that setting out on his grey pony in the dim, morning light from the old house in the high, green hill country.

A long ride and a long day, until he and his father stopped in the evening and put up at the White Hart Inn.

He was not, it seems, greatly impressed by the Canon-gate and Candlemakers' Row, and his brother's lodging in Richmond Street, where he was to pass two years of his life, he thought by no means a comfortable dwelling.

He had—so he wrote later—at this period of his life “not profited much from school instruction,” yet he considered himself fortunate, for his home life had been all that could be desired, and admirably suited to develop and strengthen his bodily and mental faculties.

At the High School of Edinburgh, then under the rectorship of the famed Dr. Adam, who, however, was becoming an old man, he learnt Latin, a little Greek, and a smattering of what then held an important place on the curriculum—Ancient Geography.

From Mr. Falconer, an admirable teacher whose rooms were on the South Bridge, he took lessons in arithmetic and writing.

The change from the Lanarkshire moors, and all the enjoyment and freedom of life at home, to the restraint and discomfort of life in lodgings was not at first pleasant.

It is curious to think nowadays of one of the troubles of his boyish life.

His elder brother, James (afterwards a well-known physician in Bath), studying at that time at the University, had numerous student friends, and probably left his young brother a good deal alone. He was often very late in coming home at night, and always excused himself by saying that he had been employed at the dissecting-room.

The fancy somehow or other got into William's head that James was engaged in a more dangerous occupation—that of procuring subjects for the dissecting-room. It was mere conjecture, but at that time churchyards were so often entered by night, and graves robbed, that great alarm and indignation were excited.

Burying-grounds were zealously watched, so that it

was difficult to obtain subjects for the dissecting-table, and Burke and Hare began to supply it with recently murdered ones.

In 1809 Liberton Mains, a few miles from Edinburgh, became the home of the family, and while living with his parents there William finished his course of study at the University, and in 1813 was apprenticed to Andrew Storie, Clerk to the Signet, for the space of four years, lending himself "Faithfully and honestly to serve him—never to be absent without leave asked or given, to abstain from the company of all profane, idle, and debauched persons, and from playing at all games of hazard."

In return for all this and £130 apprentice fee, the said Andrew Storie did bind himself faithfully and carefully to teach his apprentice the whole practice of his business, not to conceal any part thereof, but to do his endeavour to make him understand the same, so far as he had the ability to conceive.

"I think," wrote the aforetime apprentice while he was in Aberdeen, "Andrew Storie must have thought me altogether unable to conceive anything, for he never gave me a single lesson, leaving that duty to the older apprentices, one of whom was my cousin, John Riddell Stodart, something of a Radical, and William Stirling Graham, brother of the lady who wrote the 'Mystifications.'"

The life of a writer's apprentice was not eventful. Beyond the ordinary work of borrowing and returning

processes and delivering letters and memorials to counsel there was little to do. But a young man about town with a passion for sight-seeing and an interest in every manifestation of humanity, particularly any manifestation outside of the ordinary, could not live in the Edinburgh of that day and find time hang heavily on his hands.

The theatre was his supreme delight. Kean and Miss O'Neil were in their glory. Mrs. Siddons, the incomparable, was still upon the stage. The play was at that time fashionable, and all classes, from the highest to the lowest, crowded to see and hear the stars of the profession.

Vacation time was employed in reading the novels, which kept the press in a state of ceaseless activity. A novel by Sir Walter Scott or a poem of Lord Byron's created a wonderful sensation. It was no easy matter to procure them, for a novel of three volumes cost 30/-, and a poem generally 5/-.

"Don Juan" came out in two sizes—a large, dear, and a small, cheap, paper copy.

Andrew Storie's apprentice bought the cheap one, and it was read aloud in the office by Stirling Graham.

The war ceased in 1814, with the exception of the 100 days, ending in the Battle of Waterloo, and the Duke of Wellington came back to England covered with glory.

Home talent, which seems to have been repressed, burst forth with extraordinary splendour with the return of peace.

Besides Scott and Byron, Moore, Shelley, and Campbell found their fame, and Cranstoun, Moncrieff, Jeffrey, and Cockburn brought lustre to the Bar.

Miss Stirling Graham was at that time the talk of Edinburgh, and very much so in legal circles.

Watson makes frequent references to her in his letters. "Her play," he writes, "upon Lord Jeffrey was inimitable, and the great man, though previously put on his guard, was completely deceived by the young girl masquerading as an elderly lady come to consult him about the loss of 'her mill and her kiln,' and the obtaining of an eligible settlement for her daughter.

"The published account of her mystification, a copy of which she sent to me, does not do full justice to her interview with Jeffrey.

"Her brother told me that the day following there was a party given by John Clark (afterwards Lord Eldon), at which her brother and she and a number of bigwigs were present.

"When Jeffrey asked Miss Stirling Graham if she knew 'Miss Lyall of Pitlyall,' the old lady she had personated, 'Yes, a little,' she replied. 'She is a very respectable woman, somewhat peculiar in her manner, and has a small property, worth about £400 a year.'

" 'Six hundred,' exclaimed Clark, who, it is said, is looking out for a well-tochered wife, and who had also been

taken in about the mill, but more especially about the settlement for the young lady.

“As most of the others of the company were in the secret, this remark of the shrewd lawyer, shewing in what direction the wind blew, was received with shouts of laughter.”

The period of apprenticeship drew to a close, and having for some time been studying conveyancing and Scots Law, William Watson, then a young man of 24, passed his examination and secured a commission as Writer to the Signet.

As he had neither sufficient capital nor connection to commence business on his own account, he accepted Storie's offer to remain in his office as principal clerk, with the privilege of using his desk for his own private business.

CHAPTER III.

John Braidfute's book shop—A youthful attachment—Jane Welsh of Haddington—Edward Irving and his preaching—An evening with Thomas Carlyle—His love letters—Lord Eldon and his associates—Lord Jeffrey and his handwriting—Watson appointed Sheriff of Aberdeen.

WILLIAM WATSON remained for nine years as principal clerk in Storie's office. In those days there was a well-known book-shop in Parliament Square. The sign over the door was "Bell and Braidfute." Old John Braidfute was a connection of the Watson family. The shop was a favourite lounge of the advocates and a haunt of the Edinburgh literary clique. When, as often happened, Watson looked in and found Braidfute in his inner room, he would be almost certain to be asked along to dinner. The invitation would assuredly not be declined; for the young writer was at that time attached to his cousin, Eliza Stodart, a fine, handsome girl who kept house for her uncle, the aforesaid John Braidfute.

Although the youthful attraction was mutual, her uncle and guardian had other views for his niece, and with sad hearts, no doubt, but, as far as one can see, none of

the fuming and rebellion of modern disappointed lovers, the two bade each other farewell. Eliza Stodart's bosom friend was one, Jane Welsh, of Haddington.

In William Watson's diary there are a few lines concerning her—

“ Miss Welsh I often meet at the Square. She has been a pupil of Edward Irving, who, I suppose, introduced her to his friend Carlyle. She is a great admirer of Irving, and betted a pair of gloves with David Ritchie that he would soon become more popular than Dr. Chalmers.

“ Irving is a young man of a somewhat uncouth appearance, both in look and dress. He has a decided squint. All winter he wore coarse pin mittens with only one separate place for the thumb.”

Had young Watson ever heard Irving preach? If he had, the “ pin ” mittens might never have been mentioned; for then, as Gilfillan says, “ Your thoughts were transferred to Sinai, and you heard Moses speaking with the Majesty on High under the canopy of darkness, amid the quakings of the solid mountains and the glimmer of celestial fire, or you thought of Elijah praying in the intervals of the earthquake and the fire and the still, small voice.”

Of Carlyle, Watson writes—

“ I passed the evening with Thomas Carlyle at John Stodart's (W.S.'s place).

“ James French was there, and after we left he said to me, ‘ Did you ever see such a fellow as that Carlyle?

Why, he began to talk to me about *mathematics*, as if I, who have spent so many years on the tented field, cared anything about mathematics! ' "

Another time it is—

" My cousin Eliza shewed me some of Carlyle's letters to Miss Welsh. They are long, elaborate dissertations on metaphysics, and do not contain one single lover-like expression. On reading them I said, ' Though there is no love in them yet—he means marriage; and if Miss Welsh does not intend to accept him when the offer is made she had better close the correspondence! ' But Eliza said, ' Can you ever imagine Jeannie Welsh taking a man like Tom Carlyle? ' "

Andrew Storie, now becoming an old man, and sorely puzzled by the numerous Acts of Sederunt which were being passed, relegated the duties of instructing counsel and attending at the Parliament House to his principal clerk. His standing counsel was James Gordon of Craig (Aberdeenshire), a fluent speaker, who formed a good opinion of the young writer who made his memorials so plain and practical.

The study of character and its manifestation in the outward appearance, particularly in the formation of the head, was, even up to his latest years, a subject of great interest to William Watson.

As a young man, the hours during which he had often to wait the calling of cases he spent in noting what he

considered the phrenological development and the signs of intellect in members of the Bar.

The leading men were John Clark, afterwards Lord Eldon; James Moncrieff, Henry Cockburn, and Francis Jeffrey—Lords Moncrieff, Cockburn, and Jeffrey.

Of these he writes in a journal a few lines of appreciation and criticism which may be of interest, seeing that these men were leaders of the Scottish Bar in its most glorious days—

“John Clark,” he says, “is the ablest lawyer of the whole set. He has no rhetorical power whatever. His voice is harsh and unmusical and his action most ungraceful. Yet he commands the ear of the Court in all purely legal questions, and not rating the capacity of some of the judges very high, takes sometimes considerable liberty of speech.

“Pleading before Lord Alloway when his decree seemed to him erroneous, he threw his gown over his shoulder, and turning round said in his broad doric, loud enough to be heard by the bystanders—‘Lord, I’ll awa!’ (Alloway).

“Clark is inclined, it is said, to take an occasional glass too much, and the other night lost himself in York Place, where, meeting a passer-by, he asked of him, ‘Can you tell me where ane, John Clark, bides?’ ‘Why, ye’re John Clark yersel!’ ‘Oh, I ken that. It’s no him I’m wantin’—it’s his hoose!’

“ Henry Cockburn is by far the greatest orator, though he has never had any reputation as a lawyer. The finest-looking man in the Parliament House, and the most popular, when not engaged in pleading, he is surrounded by a crowd of young advocates, listening to his jokes and making the old rafters ring with their laughter.

“ Seeing him then, one would think he never could be serious, but no one can address their Lordships with more dignity and grace; and happy is the culprit who gets him for a counsel, for his influence over a jury is unbounded.

“ A jurymen in a trial for murder at Aberdeen was asked how he had found it possible to return a verdict of ‘not proven’ when the case against the accused was so clear. Said he—‘And we would have found him guilty but for you awful man (Cockburn). *He dared* us to do it.’

“ Francis Jeffrey is the cleverest and most acute man at the Bar, and has a style of eloquence peculiarly his own. It is not argumentative like Moncrieff, nor solemn and playful by turns like Cockburn, but rapid, like an impetuous torrent, carrying everything before it. A trifling peculiarity of his—the illegibility of his handwriting—gave rise to an amusing incident not long ago.

“ He had been employed to revise a proof of a printed paper to the Court of Session. In a marginal note written by him there was a word which the printer could not make out. Mr. Storie and I both tried it, but in vain, and without it the sentence was nonsense. So Robert Cheape,

an apprentice, was sent to get the learned Counsel or his clerk to tell the word.

“ He went first to the clerk, who said, ‘ I never could read a word of Jeffrey’s writing in my life, but he is in the next room ; ask himself.’

“ Robert went in to the great man, who looked at the paper, and in his abrupt way said, ‘ It is obvious, sir.’

“ Robert, who fears no one, replied, ‘ It may be so to you, sir ; but it is not obvious to anyone else.’

“ ‘ I tell you, sir, it is obvious.’

“ ‘ I tell you, sir, it is not ; for the printer can’t make it out, and Storie can’t, and Watson can’t ; and if it is not obvious to him it is not obvious to anyone else, for he can read any writing I ever saw——’

“ The word was ‘ obvious,’ and Robert played off the joke on old Storie with great delight ! ”

In March, 1829, the young advocate was offered the post of Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeenshire, largely through the recommendation of Gordon of Craig.

In May of that year he left Edinburgh for the north, having in the interval become engaged to be married to Marion Weir, a daughter of an old Lanarkshire family.

CHAPTER IV.

ABERDEEN.

Settled in Aberdeen—Glimpses of Aberdeen advocates—Provost Blaikie's sudden death—Politics in the town in the Reform days—Reception of a Parliamentary candidate—Sheriff Watson and the crowd—New Year festivities—The Sheriff and prison reform—Visit of Elizabeth Fry.

It would have been interesting to have had a picture of the outward aspect of the City of Aberdeen in the year 1829, and an account of the impression it produced upon a young man from Edinburgh who had never before trod granite streets. But in his letters there is but little of the kind, save here and there, as was but natural to a farmer's son, remarks relating to the agricultural condition of the neighbouring country.

Of signs of interest in human nature there is no lack. Several of the members of the Society of Advocates, being the individuals with whom he first came in contact, he has described in letters to friends in Edinburgh:—

“I have received much kindness from Mr. James Blaikie of Craigiebuckler (the first Provost under the Burgh Reform Act), a most excellent man, of Liberal principles, which are at a discount here.”

Of Provost Blaikie there is mention later, in October 30th, 1836, on the event of his sudden death—

“ He had been present at a meeting at Gordon’s Hospital, and had got to the foot of the Town House stairs to attend a meeting of Infirmary directors when he fell down and expired. The sensation was extreme. Here was a leading public man, universally respected, in the full vigour of health, cut down in a moment. It is very appealing, and speaks aloud a solemn lesson to all.”

“ January 4th, 1830.—I enjoyed very much dining last night in Queen Street with Alexander Crombie—a nice, old-fashioned house. He has the largest perception range (phrenology!) of any person I have seen, and his character corresponds. He knows everything relating to the county, and he seems to influence and direct all its affairs. He is besides a most honourable, genial, and hospitable man.”

“ Thomas Burnett is remarkably good-looking, and the most polite and agreeable of men. He wins golden opinions in the General Assembly, when he attends as pursebearer to the Royal Commission, alike from his dignity and agreeable manners.”

“ I am greatly attracted by Thomas Best and his family; indeed, they are my most intimate friends. His mother—a Bannerman—is sister to the member, Sir Alexander, and a woman of great character and goodness.”

“ Duncan Davidson is astute—reckoned very long-

headed, and though he does not speak much, his briefly expressed opinion goes for much.”

“ Andrew Jopp is a sound-headed, practical man of business, without ostentation, and of decided Whig principles.”

The leading members of the Society of Advocates in Aberdeen were mostly factors for lords or lairds, and so had much political and social influence.

Many of them were high Tories, opposed to most proposals for the education of the poor, the limitation of patronage, and the extension of the suffrage.

Sheriff Watson was a Liberal in politics. From his position as resident Sheriff he considered it his duty to abstain from all expression of party feeling; and although he was particular so to do, both in public and private, his Tory friends felt that he was not a Tory, and his few Whig friends conjectured that he might be a Whig.

The Honourable Captain Gordon, brother of Lord Aberdeen, represented the county for several years, and Sheriff Watson, who met him at the annual dinner of the Advocates' Society, says that his speeches were “ all right.” He always announced his willingness to do his utmost to reform all proved abuses, but unfortunately he knew of no abuses, for he thought the Church and State as nearly perfect as anything human could be.

There appears to have been great excitement in the town when Captain Ross of Rossie declared himself Whig

candidate for the Burghs, of which Aberdeen was the returning one.

One-half of the citizens met him at the Bridge of Dee, and the other half lined both sides of Union Street, hardly leaving room for the procession that occupied nearly the whole length of the street. There were flags with "Reform" devices, which did not please the Tories. Henry Lumsden called the Sheriff's attention to one particularly offensive one, and hinted that he should order it to be pulled down. But the Sheriff thought it was his duty to keep the peace, and if he could keep the people in good humour, flags would do no harm.

At any rate, during the first few years in Aberdeen, it was evident that he was no enemy to Reform.

From a scrap of an old diary, of the date January 1st, 1831, the following extract is taken:—

New Year's Day.

"A fine winter's day—the streets thronged to excess with mothers, nurses, and children buying toys; factory girls shewing off their best attire—everybody idle but toy sellers and whisky retailers.

"It is a pity there is no rational amusement for the operatives thrown idle by such a day.

"They have no enjoyment but whisky-drinking—old and middle-aged men and women and boys and girls rolling about in a state of intoxication at two o'clock."

Nine at Night.

“ The streets are quiet. How many headaches and empty pockets will there be to-morrow?—probably 5,000 out of the 55,000.

“ This number at 1/- each is £250 spent in cheap whisky.

“ Who is the greater benefactor—he who gives labour to the poor, or he who raises their moral and intellectual character?

“ Drunkards and beggars add to the number of a nation, but nothing to its strength.”

There is added, as there so frequently is at the end of a day in the faded manuscript, a prayer for love, for understanding, for charity towards his fellowmen.

Excluded from politics, Sheriff Watson began to apply himself to prison reform.

Every day called upon to punish crime, it was impossible for one of his warm and emotional nature to do so without pity for and consideration of the condition of the criminal.

That he had many obstacles in his way is evident from this account of a meeting in the Court House on April 30th, 1840—

“ Went to the County Meeting at 12. Prison Board appointed. A worse could not easily have been named—most of the persons are frequently non-resident, the resi-

dents are mostly rubbish, who oppose the Prisons Bill with all their might, and then considerately take the working of the Act.

“ The condition of the poor was taken up, when my friend, Mr. Gordon of Craig, called Dr. Allison, an enthusiast, a bigot, a man of little experience. He said that the laws relating to the poor were *all sufficient* without investigation; that the administration of the laws in Scotland was perfect; that the poor were supplied till they cried, ‘ Hold! Enough!’; that a Government Commission was the worst evil that could befall the country; that, in short, nothing was needed to be done and no enquiry necessary.

“ Mr. Thomson, of Banchory, contended that the poor were in the spirit of the Gospel liberally supplied by voluntary charity; that the Gospel precept was violated by the imposition of a compulsory assessment, and so on.

“ I replied to these speeches, and said that I supposed the gentlemen had made their remarks from personal experience, but I imagined that experience was derived from country observation, where the rich and the poor were mutually acquainted, but that in towns matters were widely different; and I knew from what I had seen that the poor in Aberdeen were in a state of great destitution; that we already laboured under the evils of compulsory assessment, but the administration was quite unequal to the task devolving on it.

“ Several spoke after me, but all to the effect that the

poor were well enough off, and to give them more would be merely to encourage extravagance.”

Owing to the new local Police Act, which came into operation in 1829, a number of new offenders were created hitherto unnoticed, and the prisons were filled with offenders sentenced by the burgh magistrate to short periods of confinement.

Men, women, and children were sent to jail for trifling offences. The effect of which was to taint the character without reforming the morals, and rendering it extremely difficult for them to find respectable employment in the future.

“ I had a conference to-day,” so runs a letter, “ with several manufacturers—Messrs. Hadden, Pirie, Reid—and stated the matter to them. They thought the difficulty insuperable, as their work-people had the greatest possible objection to associate with individuals who, from whatever cause, had been in prison. This was more especially the case with women, who would not allow one of their sex to come with the jail-brand into their select society.”

Miss Elizabeth Fry about this time came to Aberdeen to visit the prison and establish a Ladies’ Prison Society. Mr. Watson says of her and her endeavours—

“ She took me into her confidence. In the Royal Hotel she gave a general account of the object of her mission to a large gathering of ladies and gentlemen. She is a tall,

noble-looking woman, mild and gentle, but yet commanding, and it was beautiful to hear her, surrounded by a crowd of admiring listeners, giving expression in mellow tones to lessons of wisdom and experience—showing that the law of love was of universal application, and that the true way to reform the prisoner was to prove to him that you were sorry for his sufferings, and would do anything in your power to help him.”

Nevertheless, in spite of his respect and admiration for this self-sacrificing woman, he was doubtful whether Miss Fry’s Ladies’ Visiting Society tended much to the good of the prisoner.

He was convinced that if the prison is to answer the end of its institution, it ought either to deter the commission of crime, or reclaim the offender.

A Board of Health had, on the advice of Sheriff Watson, been established in the city in 1831.

One day, when the members were discussing means for the improvement of a certain filthy close, the door of the Council chambers was thrown open, and one of the town sergeants announced — “ My Lord, a case of cholera is reported at the Bridge of Dee ! ”

Several of the members rose and left at once in a kind of panic, as though at the very word the Council chambers were already infected.

Sheriff Watson refers frequently to the dreaded epidemic in his diary—

“ Attended at the Board of Health to receive the medical reports and give requisite instruction on matters of detail—great difficulty with certain of the doctors—not satisfied with the fee we propose to give.

“ The malady is not spreading beyond the vicinity of the Den Burn, Lochside, and along the watercourse from the loch till it reaches the harbour, near Sugarhouse Lane.”

When cholera had left, he bent his energies toward the opening of a House of Refuge for the friendless and destitute. The project cost much trouble, but in time the seed brought forth fruit. Dr. Watt, a rich man who lived in Dee Street, and had lost an only son from cholera, was anxious to employ part of his money in benefiting his fellows, and gave £1,000 towards the establishment of the proposed House.

This liberal gift was followed by others, and in September, 1836, the House of Refuge was opened in Guestrow.

One of the first inmates was Mr. Bennet, late major in the 5th Foot. “ He says,” reports the Sheriff, “ he came to Aberdeen to meet a friend, and his money being all spent went into or fell into the harbour. When taken out by the police, he said that his misfortunes were such that he did not care though death ended them.

“ The police brought him to the House, where he has remained since Thursday. He seems exceedingly grateful. Thomas Burnett is taking much interest in him, and has

communicated with the Marquis of Douro, who it seems is acquainted with Bennet.”

The end of this sad occurrence is lost in the mist. One would have liked to have known something of Major Bennet's future.

CHAPTER V.

The new House of Refuge—Priest Gordon as a director—Some of the Sheriff's "diversions"—The Philosophical Society at the Lemon Tree Inn—An early Victorian dandy—Dr. Forsyth of Belhelvie—The Sheriff on feminine accomplishments—A dinner party at Derncleugh—Queen Victoria's wedding—An Esquimau visitor on the celebrations.

THE House of Refuge set agoing, there were still difficulties ahead. Of one of them there is a certain pleasure in the reading, if only because it shows a certain advance in toleration in present-day views.

September 27, 1836.

"A meeting in the Courthouse of the subscribers to the House of Refuge. The regulations read by Mr. Angus, Town Clerk.

"They were mostly agreed to, and Baillie Milne read the names of parties to be placed on the list of directors.

"On the name of Charles Gordon being read [Priest Gordon of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Chapel], Sir William Seton asked to what denomination he belonged, and on the Baillie telling him he was a Roman Catholic, Sir William, with considerable reluctance, objected on conscientious grounds to placing his name on the list.

“The discussion became animated. Sir William’s motion was seconded. The Rev. Abercrombie Gordon, minister of Greyfriars Parish Church, thought as there were nine Protestant clergymen to one Roman Catholic, there was not much danger to be apprehended, but he gave Sir William all due credit for his Protestant feeling, and afterwards as his Protestant zeal warmed in a speech against the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, concluded by saying that he would support Sir William.

“The Rev. David Simpson thought it would be better to save much heartburning and dispute by excluding the priest.

“At this moment my friend, the Rev. John Brown of S. Paul’s Episcopal Church, rose from a back seat, and, drawing up his tall figure to its full height, and looking down on the smaller men with a look half of pity, half of scorn, said:—

“‘The question resolves itself into this—“Is a Roman Catholic competent to act as a director of the House of Refuge in Aberdeen?” In my opinion the motion is quite opposed to Protestantism, the basis of which is the right of private judgment to the individual.

“‘That liberty which I claim for myself I allow to a Roman Catholic. No man has made more mistakes on this part than I have.

“‘When in Ireland I and my Protestant brethren

thought it right to war to the knife with the Catholic Faith. Gentlemen, I have since bitterly repented every word I have spoken against Catholicity.

“ ‘ I have frequently seen infant institutions strangled in their birth by the introduction of sectarian spirit.

“ ‘ What harm could there be in having Mr. Gordon, whom I (and I know the Sheriff) are proud to call our friend, on the list of directors? ’ ”

The description of this vivid little scene finishes with the remark—

“ And all the time the Reverend Charles Gordon sat beside me with his quiet, composed, modest look, as if he was in no way concerned in what was going on.

“ Brown ended amid applause, the greater part of the audience being with him.

“ But I am afraid a few of our ultra-Protestant friends are not satisfied.”

On the same page, further down, is written—

“ I have commenced the perusal afresh of the New Testament, with the view of discovering the spirit of Christianity—the very truth as it is in Jesus.”

What with ordinary Court business, which included long and tedious journeys by coach into remote parts of the country, his work on boards, his new-fledged philanthropic project, and his growing domestic interests, the Sheriff must have found his time pretty fully occupied, and it is not surprising to read of a resolution made—one more

honoured in the breach than in the observance—to “get up after this at six every morning.”

Yet his life was not without what were then called its “diversions.”

A sociable club of which he was a member gave him much enjoyment. It used to meet alternately in a public house in the old town and in the Lemon Tree Inn in the new. The hour of meeting was eight o'clock. An essay was read. A discussion followed, and an adjournment made to the supper room, where nicely cooked viands, a tumbler or two of whisky-punch, fun, and philosophy kept the company in great good humour until “the wee, sma' hours.”

Dr. Fleming and Dr. Gregory were the founders of this Philosophical Society, and the quaint stories of the former were a great feature of the evenings.

One can read between the lines of a waning interest in the meetings after the two old town doctors left, and the gathering began to meet in the Advocates' Library.

Whether or no it was the blank caused by their departure which was the cause of this, or the fact that in the more reputable building the sole refreshments provided were tea and bread and butter, is a matter for conjecture.

An extract from a letter to a relative gives a sample of the Philosophical Society's entertainment:—

“I was much amused at the Philosophic last night. The papers read were the most absurd things in the world.

One gave a description of a fire here ; the absurdity consisted in the minuteness and insignificance of the details. Another paper was on the subject of trout — whether the Finnick and sea trout were of the same species. An endless number of experiments seemed to demonstrate that they were, but the subject was too important to be hastily determined.”

It is so important that it still continues to be discussed yearly in the newspapers.

Aberdeen in those days, to judge from accounts of pleasant dinners and supper parties, must have been a friendly, sociable place.

These descriptions, short but somehow vivid, with their shreds of table talk of a bygone day, have gathered a charm with the passing of the years. For instance, this little account of an early Victorian dandy :—

Monday, May 5, 1840.

“ I dined at Mr. Stronach’s, met Mr. Mitchel, Commissioner of Woods and Forests. There were several other guests and a dandy.

“ The dandy was the most curious thing I have seen for some time. He had a blue coat with round, ball buttons. The short wristbands were turned back and covered the cuffs of the coat. The waistcoat was black velvet, confined at the breast with three stars of brilliant stones attached to each other, with a gold chain. The collar of the waist-

coat, tight and high at the throat, seemed instead of a neck cloth. He wore a large pearl ring on his forefinger, and black spurs on patent leather boots. He only took off his gloves (white kid) during dinner. Altogether a most amusing-looking creature, and not absolutely a fool."

October 7.

"The town is filling fast for the great (agricultural) show. I dined with Mr. Blaikie, met Mr. Jardine, editor of the "Literary Gazette," and his daughter.

"Dr. Forsyth, the inventor of the percussion lock, and minister of Belhelvie, was also there. He was in a most disputing state of mind, and begged leave to differ with every observation that was made.

"Mr. Jardine thought that the sick bed was a place where a clergyman might be supposed to have a beneficial effect. The doctor thought that clergymen should not visit their people, unless when they were in danger of growing wild with prosperity!"

There are but few harsh judgments in these records, yet one or two individuals did exist whom the writer of them could not tolerate.

"Dined with Mr. Best and Admiral Henderson at Mr. Leslie of Powis's. Powis kept almost sober, and we had rather a pleasant party, but for that rhinoceros doctor (Clark), he was more liberally intolerant, and consequently vulgar, than I ever saw him. Both sides of the Church

are, according to him, fools and knaves, or both. They are bringing down the Establishment, which he rejoices at. I have little patience with such an unitarian—where the sole duty is self; but I am doubtful whether we should rather laugh at or pity him.”

There were dull parties, then as now. We can almost feel the boredom of this one:—

“We had a young party in the evening. Three Misses Blaikie, Miss Black, etc., etc. Tea, music, and conversation. A good deal of the music, and not much of the conversation. The young ladies of the present day are more trained to the ornamental, and in many instances impassible, than to the useful and practical.

“Few women have the capacity to play well. All or nearly all may be taught to talk agreeably. In ordinary society the great want seems to be a common topic. Religious people have one book to refer to, but ordinary people have no common standard. It would be a great improvement if reading were introduced at parties, the reading limited to a quarter or half an hour. The reader would, of course, select an interesting subject, and it would afford something for observation, which would lead on to conversation, the want of which makes society so little agreeable.”

The following evening there was a dinner party at Dorncleugh:—

“Along with us were Professor Scott, Old Aberdeen,

and Mr. Chalmers, advocate. The other guests—Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, Perth; Mrs. Blaikie, Craigiebuckler, and her two sons, etc.

“ We had a good deal of discussion on various subjects, phrenology being the principal, I maintaining the doctrine against all opposers. I only made a partial conversion. Professor Scott considers it absolute nonsense, and not worth talking about.

“ These Old Town professors have all the mental sluggishness of the monks, without their activity in acts of charity.”

This seems a little rough, as far as we can judge, on Professor Scott.

In February, 1840, the city was en fête for the wedding of Queen Victoria.

Aberdeen, illuminated by the new and wonderful discovery of gas light on a blustering February night, must have been a cheering spectacle.

“ It was a fine day ” (so runs the narration) “ and the people seemed to be enjoying themselves. I went down the town at one and visited the Soup Kitchen and House of Refuge. At the former 1,300 bowls of soup with beef and a roll were served gratis to all comers, up to that number.

“ Marion and I and the bairns then went and saw the mail coach, ornamented with evergreens and drawn by beautiful horses, pass through the streets.

“ The banquet looked well in the Town Hall.

“ The fireworks which succeeded the banquet, and were to fill up the time till the ball began, took it into their heads to take fire all at once, and shorten the exhibition considerably. The gas illuminations would have been very fine if the wind had allowed them to burn. The whole affair passed off as orderly and quietly as possible with the exception of the fireworks, which, as I say, passed off rather in a hurry.

“ The ball began at eleven. To the lover whose fair one seemed the most fair, to the lady whose dress seemed to herself the most tasteful, I daresay it was very delightful.

“ To me, whose taste for costly foolery is gone by, the whole thing appeared indifferent. The rooms were ill-lighted. Our eyes nowadays won't submit to anything less brilliant than gas, and the supper, which should have been sumptuous, was meagre and shabby.”

The latter part of the description relates to the curiously named Esquimau whom Captain Penny brought home in 1839, and was now showing to a much interested country.

“ The person who seemed most pleased—and it was delightful to watch him—was the Esquimau. His broad, good-humoured face wore a perpetual smile, yet there was no extravagance of admiration. He moved about comparing (I have no doubt) his own snow house and little, squat inmates with the lofty hall and brilliant assemblage, and probably giving the preference to the former; for though

all the people spoke to him, yet it was in an unknown tongue, and I have no doubt the delight he felt was in a great degree prospective, and consisted in the fancied wonder and astonishment with which his description would be received by those he loved at home.

“ ‘ What a joyous thing is civilisation,’ the savage might exclaim if he saw it only in a ball room, but if he saw it at the door of a soup kitchen, where feeble, old age, and ragged youth were contending for a meal, he would probably conclude that it had its miseries as well as his own wild nature.”

Aberdeen has showered lavish hospitalities and honours on celebrities from many distant lands, but the cultured Esquimau has not shared in them in our day.

“ We live in a wonderful age,” is a common phrase, and in view of modern development, scientific, social, and inventive, are inclined to look with a complacent pity on the world of even so short a time ago as seventy years; but grandfathers and great-grandfathers did the same, and those who come after us will view this generation from their own standpoint of advance.

March 6, 1840.

“ A fine frosty day. Walked to the point of the pier before dinner. The shipbuilding goes on briskly, every shipbuilding yard having several ships on the stocks. The iron ship is getting on her rigging, and looks very handsome

in the water. ‘There is nothing new under the sun,’ said Solomon. I wonder what he would have said if he had lived till the 19th century.”

CHAPTER VI.

Sheriff Watson and the poet, John Clare—A large order of books—Visits to the country—Tarland, a most law-loving district—Professor Blackie—Alexander Bain, “a little, clever, self-conceited creature”—Disruption controversies—Sheriff Watson’s views—A S. Paul’s Episcopal Church dispute—The Sheriff and the Corn Laws—Election episodes.

IN Quiller-Couch’s Oxford Book of English Verse, and probably in other collections, there is a striking poem by John Clare, headed “Written in Northampton County Asylum.”

The last stanza runs—

“ I long for scenes, where man has never trod,
For scenes where woman never smiled or wept :
There to abide with my Creator God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Full of high thoughts unborn. So let me lie,
The grass below, above the vaulted sky.”

Little is known of the life of this unfortunate genius. It is therefore interesting to find allusion made to him in a private diary.

Sheriff Watson writes :—

“ I read in the ‘ English Journal ’ an account of the

poet, Clare—presently in a madhouse—his illness caused, as is supposed by distress occasioned by the small sale of his writings. Moved by compassion, I wrote to the madhouse keeper enquiring where I could procure his writings, and saying that if Clare had reserved the sale of them I would be disposed to buy them all.

“ I was not a little astonished to-day by a letter from my correspondent talking of my ‘ generosity,’ and informing me that the whole unsold publications in the hands of the booksellers, exclusive of bindings, amounted to £268, and saying that my buying them all would be a great thing both for publisher and poet. I replied that I was very sorry that my careless mode of expressing myself had occasioned a very great mistake, that I only meant a copy of all the poet’s works, and not all the works of the publisher in multiplying copies.

“ The Caledonian Hunt were supposed to have been liberal when they subscribed for 100 copies of Burns’ works, but that was nothing to my being supposed to wish 500 copies of Clare.”

In the same week his thoughts are still turned in pity to the distressed literary man :—

“ I came to Pitcaple to dinner. The country looks beautiful, but the hay crop miserable, and along the water-side the potatoes are quite blackened with frost.

“ I wandered about all afternoon ‘ looking frae me ’ and hearing the birds sing. The only book I brought me was

a volume of Clare's poetry, which I read with a melancholy delight, turning my eyes every now and then to gaze on the lovely landscape, and to reflect that the author of the verse who described Nature's beauties so well was now in confinement.

“ ‘ His sweet bells jangled sadly out of tune.’ ”

The state of the country villages and the peculiar characteristics which seem to cling to certain districts appear in this description.

“ Small Debt Court at Tarland.—This is the most law-loving district in the county, and the people plead their causes with such energy and fervour, not to say violence. When one litigant gets on one side of me and the other on the other, I am sometimes afraid that in the blows each of them seem prepared to give I shall get my share.

“ However, the case once ended, they generally go off in an amicable manner.

“ Formerly the place was notorious for assaults, attended with great violence; now no case of assault ever occurs, the animal spirits seeming to be expended in courts of law.

“ The people in general are extremely poor, and in most cases poverty and inability to pay are the real cause of the law suit. In large tracts of country attached to the Tarland Court district, there has not been anything like a crop for three years.”

A stray line here and there merely mentioning some casual incident contains, sometimes, enough within it to show certain characteristics of the writer.

“ I have been to Mr. Wilson’s concert. It is a great trial to me to hear Scottish music, sung as it should be.

“ I could not help myself I was so deeply affected by ‘ I’m wearin’ awa’, Jean’ that I felt tears upon my cheek. When he breathed in the most melting melody, ‘ Our bonnie bairn is there, Jean,’ it was more than I could stand.”

Another time it is two Miss Smiths who are singing. “ I met them,” he says, “ at Professor Blackie’s. They are actresses. Fine, fair, fat, lively girls of twenty and twenty-two, who laugh, and talk, and sing with perfect ease and simplicity.”

In the *Aberdeen Journal* of the day there is a report of these two Miss Smiths and their “ ravishing ” singing in the theatre of such ditties as “ Angels gently whisper ” and “ Come under my plaidie.”

Professor Blackie, then a young professor living in the Old Town, he thinks “ a fine, jolly fellow—all very well when he sticks to Roman and Greek poets, but rather apt to let his imagination run away with him in conversation.”

The “ fine, jolly, young ” professor was fond of intellectual supper parties—

“ At Professor Blackie’s last night to meet three educational men. One was a moral teacher, a Mr. Bain, who reads Professor Glennie’s lectures in the College, a little,

clever, self-conceited creature, who would have it that it is only the moral part of the Scriptures that is worthy of belief. Another was a theological teacher, who was of opinion that all parts of the Bible were alike worthy of credit; and the third was an actual teacher, Mr. Trail of the West-End, who would receive no statement not logically correct and capable of immediate proof.

“ They had, as may be supposed, a very pretty discussion, ending as it began, each one retaining his own opinion.”

The great controversy in the Church of Scotland, which ended in the Disruption of 1843, was in 1841 a fast gathering storm, and the note of battle had already been sounded between intrusionist and non-intrusionist, moderate and evangelical parties. A movement which shook the spiritual life of Scotland to its foundations, and affected more or less all sections of the community, naturally fills a large place in the correspondence of one deeply interested in national and individual religion, and the effect upon them of ecclesiastical questions.

To read certain letters relating to the struggle is to bring back to life those stirring and stronghearted if contentious times. One or two extracts will serve to show the inclinations and views of the writer of them:—

“ Charles ” (his brother) “ seems to think I am a non-intrusionist; if the truth were told, I am an anti-patron-
agist, and so must approve of any step in advance upon

that radical vice in the Church—the privilege of patronage. I have the highest possible respect for the Secretary of State, and for Lord Normanby in particular, but I think the Parish of Liberton, or any other parish subject to Crown patronage is as likely to make choice of a suitable minister as Mr. Secretary. If this be the case in Crown patronage, much more in common lay patronage. I happen to know something of half a score of lay patrons, and I should be very sorry to take a *cat* on their recommendation much more a minister.

“The cat, if like the patrons, would be a most undomestic, raking brute, and I suspect the minister would be such like.”

On Sunday, 11th April, 1841, his diary reads:—

“Our Sacrament. Service lasted from ten to half-past four, and from six to half-past eight.

“Whatever the Moderator may say, it appears to me clear, that the Scottish people are essentially a religious people, and, consequently, the most religious minister will be the most popular. The present agitation will increase the religious feeling, because, although non-intrusion and such-like matters are mixed up with it, the end, however arrived or aimed at, is the promotion of true religion, which, like all truth, will sooner or later rise to the top and become apparent.

“Dry leaves, which the Church has lately been, pro-

duce nothing. They may nourish in their decay the young shoots from the old, firm-rooted trunk, but they are dead leaves nevertheless."

As far as churches were concerned, Aberdeen was just then experiencing a stormy time.

The Rev. Sir William Dunbar (successor to Rev. John Brown) had many interviews with Sheriff Watson relative to the strained relations between himself and Bishop Skinner.

The congregation of S. Paul's, although in communion with the English Episcopal Church, had some years before agreed under certain conditions to acknowledge the Scottish Bishop's authority. Disagreements, however, arose, and waxed intolerable, until, to the surprise of all, one Sunday the Bishop read the sentence of excommunication on Sir William Dunbar, giving him over to a "reprobate mind," and forbidding all Christian people of the true Church to hold communion with him.

"The people," writes Sheriff Watson on August 19, 1842, "are all talking of Sir William Dunbar's excommunication, and are most freely excommunicating the Bishop. I have scarcely heard a single defence for his strange, hasty, extraordinary proceeding."

National politics were also in a risky condition, and caused more widespread interest than do affairs of State at the present time.

May 3, 1841.

“ So the Corn Laws are in danger. Everything is in danger. What an outcry the landlords will make—all for the good of the tenants—and the tenants, simple people, will believe them.

“ But the Corn Laws must go for all that. For there must either be an increased consumption by a diminished taxation or an increased taxation on a permanently taxable subject, and that is land. And the landlords will rather have a reduced corn tax than a direct property tax, and so the Corn Laws will go, or at least suffer great modification. The two million of short-coming must be made up, and it will be seen that a moderately fixed duty on corn will be the best means of doing it.

“ Mr. Gordon of Craig, on his way to vote for the Tory at the Stirling election, dined with us to-day, also Dr. MacRobin and Mr. Anderson.

“ It is foreseen that Sir Robert Peel will be Prime Minister, but no one foresees how he will fish for a Budget, how he will govern Ireland, or regulate the affairs of the Scots Kirk.

“ If he succeeds in raising the revenue, keeping Ireland quiet, and satisfying the General Assembly, his memory will rival that of Pitt. We shall see.”

In July, 1841, the impending General Election was causing great excitement, partly on account of the riotous behaviour of the Chartists, the partakers in that extra-

ordinary movement for universal suffrage, a study of which proves so interesting to-day.

“ I have just been at the nomination of candidates for the city. Mr. Lumsden of Clova named Mr. Bannerman for Free Trade, Mr. James Hadden named Mr. Innes for Monopoly, and Mr. Legge, a stone-mason, named Mr. Lawrie as Chartist. On a show of hands, Mr. Lawrie was declared to have a majority. The Whig and Tory speeches were commonplace. The Chartist clever, earnest, and mob-pleasing.

“ It was a fine day and everything went off well. The Whig and Tory railed at each other, and the Chartist railed at both, but most at the Tory, and the electors and non-electors cheered and shouted and hissed as the speakers pleased or displeased.

“ A Chartist called the Duke of Wellington ‘ Butcher of Waterloo,’ at which his own party hissed. The mob are often more charitable than their leaders.

“ Mr. Hadden called Dr. Dewar ‘ an officious priest,’ when the people cried ‘ Oh ! ’

“ A Chartist railed against the Prisons Act, and against the Whigs for having passed it. I afterwards asked him if he had ever visited a prison since the Prisons Act. ‘ No,’ said he. Had he done so before? ‘ Yes ’; ‘ but,’ said I, ‘ if you were to visit the prisons now, probably you would

change your opinion in regard to the Prisons Act,' and that I would give him an order for admission.

“ The Chartist leader observed to me that the people would not have behaved so well if they (the Chartists) had not been on the hustings.”

CHAPTER VII.

The preaching in the West Church—Rev. Dr. Davidson and his ways—A sudden stoppage of a Doxology—Indications of the Disruption—Sheriff Watson on Unitarianism—An official excursion to Donside—The Small Debt Court and its witnesses—Unveiling of the Duke of Gordon Statue.

DURING all his life in Aberdeen Sheriff Watson was a member of the West Church, the minister of which was the Rev. Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Davidson. The question constantly arises in one's mind while reading the letters which have gone to the making of this book—"Were there in Aberdeen in those days other preachers who numbered among their audience many such eager and attentive listeners as the writer of them?"

How many lucid accounts of the minister's last sermons went to his mother at Liberton it would be hard to say.

In his diary of a Sunday evening he wrote down his thoughts and opinions concerning the great questions alluded to or suggested by the discourses of the day.

The extent of the Atonement, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the old themes of Justification and Conversion are discussed reverently and seriously.

He held fast by the creed of the Church, but, though

zealously evangelical, he, with a keen observation of the current thought and needs of the time could not shut his eyes to her limitations.

For Dr. Davidson he had a great respect. He did not think him an eloquent, but an able preacher, and he knew him for a scholar, while his clear and logical discourses riveted the attention of his hearers. He did not perhaps rouse the mind to any high pitch of devotion, although Lord Moncrieff, who once went with Sheriff Watson to his church, declared him one of the best preachers he had ever heard.

At the time of the Disruption, excitement improved his preaching, and he became more and more eloquent, until he reached his climax, and then gradually fell to the former uniformity of goodness which was his natural characteristic.

“ To-day ” (so runs a letter dated May 8, 1843) “ Mr. Davidson preached one of his great sermons. There was a fervour and a freedom in the tone and action of the speaker which has seldom been manifested since he became minister of the West Church. He preached from the text—‘ But if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.’ ”

“ He said that he trusted that he had preached the Gospel with sincerity and simplicity and truth, and he asked if after all his preaching it was not hid to many, and, if so, it was hid to the lost. He observed that his statements had no reference to the great questions that presently

agitate the Church, but it was palpable to any one that the sermon was delivered with the feelings of a man who was about to separate from his flock, and whom he was warning for the last time of the danger of listening to sermons without profiting by the truth delivered. It was evident that he had broken the bonds of the Establishment, and had become a Free man.

“ I am sure that most of us quailed under the flashes of his vivid illustrations, when he painted the merchant and the student, priding themselves on the honourableness of their position, but so occupied with it that they had no time to consider the great decisions of Christianity, which to them were ‘ hid ’ doctrines.”

“ When he leaves,” he adds, “ two-thirds of his congregation will go after him.”

That the writer was justified in his belief in the devotion of the flock in the West Church to their minister is seen a little later in an account of a dinner party.

“ At Mr. Thom’s to meet Mr. Davidson and his elders and friends—a regular Free Church gathering. All the ladies promised gifts to the minister while he is on small pay; potatoes are promised, and butter; also snuff and other articles of luxury of which he is fond.”

Friends became enemies in Aberdeen in those days and enemies friends, and to read private accounts of the dissension is to make one wonder whether people are wiser nowadays or only more indifferent, for it is difficult to ima-

gine an ecclesiastical situation which could effect such breaking of bonds.

“ ‘How long?’ asks Mrs. Hadden—(we can imagine the question put somewhat sarcastically)—‘How long, then, in your opinion, Mrs. Best, will the Free Church last?’

“ ‘Mrs. Best was an old lady of character and wit.

“ ‘Just as long,’ she replies, ‘as the Almighty has any use for it, and then it will vanish away, like other useless things.’ ”

If only (in Sheriff Watson’s opinion) Dr. Davidson had been somewhat more interested in practical benevolence he would have been a great and noble man.

He was no tolerator of innovations against the established order of things. On one occasion he preached in the East Church, where psalmody was encouraged by Dr. Foote, and at the close of the last psalm the precentor, according to his custom, began to sing a Doxology. Dr. Davidson leant over and tapped him on the head to make him stop, but not understanding the reprimand he sang on. Another tap—not attended to. At last the minister, losing all patience, could no longer submit to this manifestation of ritualism and ordered the congregation to cease, pronouncing there and then the benediction, greatly to its discomfiture.

The Reverend John Brown, incumbent of S. Paul’s Episcopal Church, was the clergyman who drew forth the warmest tribute of admiration. In letters he is referred

to again and again—his eloquence, his broad-mindedness, and his enthusiastic support of all charitable and humanitarian schemes.

With the Reverend Charles Gordon (familiarily known in Aberdeen as “ Priest Gordon ”) he had much friendly intercourse, and long afterwards in recalling the associates of those days in the North, he would speak of that “ real Christian, Charles Gordon.”

In passing a certain building in Aberdeen, the one who has put together this biography has often seen, in imagination, within its doorway a picture of seventy years ago.

A tall figure with a handsome presence, and brave, animated bearing, eagerly discussing another subject with the old-time dealer in fishing tackle than hooks and flies.

May 5, 1843.

“ I had a court. Not a great deal of business. Called at the fishing hook dressers to get some flies for to-morrow’s fishing. Talked to him on theology. A thought occurred to me. We were speaking of Unitarian clergymen becoming too Unitarian for their people. I remarked that, assuming for argument’s sake that Christ was a mere man, He was more entitled to our worship than any hero who had ever been Deified, because He had revealed the greatest truth that ever had been revealed. Born and educated a Jew, and acquainted, as no doubt He was, with

Jewish theology and the mythology of the Greeks and Romans, He had revealed that the Almighty was not the God of the Jews only, but that He was to me and the whole human race ‘Our Father who is in Heaven.’ This appeared to me the most momentous truth that had ever been promulgated, that till Christ’s time it had never been realised in the light in which He placed it, and that since His time it was the only truth which, rightly believed in, could make man either great or good.”

Excursions on judicial business into the country, which often ended with a cast of the line in the Ugie, Dee, or Don, afforded him a great deal of pleasure. From every chance acquaintance he gleaned something of interest—a travelling companion on the “Defiance,” a labourer by the roadside, the laird and his lady in the old mansion house.

“I was talking to a decent, old man mending his gate at Tarland to-day. He had some vague notions of equality and the rights of the poor, gathered, I have no doubt, from the Chartists. When I came home, my little John was in the garden, and I took up a hoe and began using it beside him. He, as children do, at once wanted my hoe. I put him off, and he began solemnly to question me—

“‘Is all mine yours?’ he said.

“‘Yes,’ I answered.

“‘Then,’ he replied, ‘all yours must me mine, and I want that hoe.’

“ Rather remarkable that a child of four should have acquired this much use of his reason.”

Tuesday, June 5.

“ Francis Gordon and I went to Haughton, twenty-four miles up Donside, to rectify, as the Laird says, a blunder committed fifty years ago. I think the rectification the greater blunder of the two, but that is his affair.

“ The Laird is a fine looking old man of sixty and upwards, with a high region of benevolence, and, as Mr. Gordon says, has the soul of honour that would not hurt a fly. He gives me the idea of the Laird of Ellangowan in ‘ Guy Mannering,’ as simple, and, as far as I understand, not unlike him in his fortunes. The object of the legal foolery I was engaged in to-day was to satisfy the scruples of a money-lender, who, by the accumulation of lawyer’s charges and principals and interests, is very likely soon to become sole proprietor.

“ The lady of Haughton is a daughter of the Baronet of Monymusk, and is the representative of Mrs. Bertram as her husband is of Ellangowan—a quiet, ‘ thowless ’ looking person. Capable, probably, of feeling for her husband in his difficulties, but unable to assist him in getting out of them. They have both a wonderful conceit of themselves, and will probably be astonished to awake some morning and find themselves penniless, with the lands they were so vain of passed into the hands of some ‘ Gilbert

Glossom,' whose fortune has been made in doing that for them which they should have done for themselves."

It has been said that there are few places better fitted for sharpening the intellect, maturing the judgment, and getting a knowledge of mankind than such a place as a Small Debt Court. The cases are so numerous and so different, and the statements of parties so conflicting, that unless the truth is perceived by an almost intuitive quickness, and the judgment at once prompt and unhesitating, the judge will be harassed by doubts and the litigant perplexed by the seeming uncertainty of the decision.

From incidents told of Sheriff Watson, it would appear that he had attained to great facility in eliciting the truth.

Among others, one story is recalled of a witness who had been primed beforehand as to what she was to say, and whose long statement, with its many asseverations, was listened to patiently by the Sheriff, until she came to a sudden standstill.

"Now, my good woman," he then said quietly, "will you look at me, and tell me if this story is true."

Silence in the court for the space of half a minute, and then in a burst of candour, possibly of relief—"Not a single word o't, my Lord. It's a' a lee, fae beginning to end."

On the 7th of March, in the year 1843, the good folk of Aberdeen were crowding to the Castlegate to see the "braw new statue of the good Duke of Gordon unveiled."

Vendors of "timmer" goods, oranges, and dates, who

waited for the people to disperse before setting up their stalls, spoke a somewhat richer Doric than their successors do to-day. Many of them could neither read nor write. Probably none had seen a railway train, yet they would be the same as their descendants in a shrewd, pawky wit and in the ability to drive a bargain.

Rich and poor, gentle and simple, patiently or impatiently awaited the event that "cold, draughty morning." We know of Doctors Tulloch and Fleming of King's College, who were there, "pacing backwards and forwards arm in arm."

Brave men were they. Alone among the professoriate they had adhered to the great secession in the Church, and dared the consequences.

A well-known town's physician and a member of Parliament stood together discussing the Irish State trials and the O'Connell rising.

At the door of the Court House Sheriff Watson talked with young Blackie of the University.

"I don't know much about the Confession of Faith," remarked the latter, airily, "but I intend to look into it some day."

"You remind me of Lady Betty or Lady Charlotte Somebody," said the Sheriff, "who did not know much about Shakespeare, but intended to read him 'some afternoon.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.

Wretched conditions of young people in Aberdeen—The first Industrial School for boys started—A visit from Lord Cockburn—Industrial School for girls opened—Dissension among the ladies—The Voluntary Industrial system inadequate—Sheriff Watson's proposal to the Magistrates—Sixty-five begging children apprehended.

It is not possible, even after so many years, to draw the veil from the sanctities of a life.

Religious thoughts and aspirations, tender words regarding those dear to the writer of this old, clasped diary, are only deciphered to be shut away again.

But one who has read it may say this much at least. Here was a man who, when there were many ways of looking at a question, that one which was the least worldly and the most ideal would inevitably be the way taken by him and followed up with energy to the last.

In the year 1839, on the last night of the year, his thoughts run on this wise:—

“What have I done for my fellow-men?

“Nothing!

“Nothing!

“Nothing!

“What can I do?

“What does He will that I do?

“That I love Him with all my strength and might—and my neighbour as myself.

“How can I love the Father and not the child?

“I must live no longer for myself but for His little ones.

“Faith without works is dead.”

At the commencement of 1841 the House of Refuge, flourishing now for four years, had a capital of £6,000.

The Society for the Education of the Poor, instituted by his suggestion, and supported largely by his exertions, was in full working order, and last of all, the Industrial School scheme, towards which his desires had for long been turned, had now taken definite shape and form.

It was the needs and demands of the children, “the poor bairns,” which weighed on his mind night and day. To a brother in Edinburgh, who in a letter had remarked that there seemed “no end to the forming of new institutions in Aberdeen,” he replied—

“Why should there not, if the old be not sufficient? When I find that there are 280 children here under 14 years of age who have no means of subsisting but by begging and stealing, I think it is high time to attempt another new institution.”

To Mr. Thomson of Banchory, who had shown interest

in the proposal, and who subsequently gave substantial assistance to the schools, he wrote in answer to a request for information, that in the previous year 43 children for one offence or another, were sent to prison, and he concluded his letter in these words—

“ What could be more cruel or absurd than to send a child of 8, 9, 10, or 11 years to prison for theft, begging, or breach of the peace, when it is known that unless by begging and stealing 99 in 100 have no way of subsisting.”

At last, after much opposition and few promises of help, the first industrial school was opened in a small room in Chronicle Lane on the first of October, 1841.

On the day fixed, Professor Brown of the Free Church College, Mr. Thomson of Banchory, and Sheriff Watson met in the humble building and waited for the first scholars. The experiment was now to be tried whether the juvenile mendicant and thief would submit to discipline and learn to do well. By and bye ten were inveigled in, and that number was reckoned sufficient to begin with.

Doubtless the poor boys were greatly astonished, wondering for what offence they had been apprehended, and why they had not been taken at once to the police office.

Their wonder must have increased when Professor Brown said “ Let us pray,” and open-eyed and mouthed they listened when their fate was explained to them—that instead of being allowed to beg, they were to be taught to read and write, and for their work they would get break-

fast and dinner and supper, and be allowed to go home at night.

Delighted at these conditions, the poor waifs set themselves to tease a quantity of hair which had been procured, and the three anxious directors now breathed freely. Their small victory was still a complete one, and they were repaid for preliminary toil.

This "wee, small school" in Chronicle Lane went on successfully enough for some time, the scholars increasing in numbers and the teachers in experience.

They were taught to read and write. They worked at teasing hair and making salmon nets.

"Lord Cockburn came down with me to Chronicle Lane" (so runs a letter) "to visit the place, and said he wished to learn net-making, and took up the net, but his juvenile instructor soon stopped him with, 'Hoots, man, that's no the wye ava.'"

A leading article in the *Aberdeen Herald* of September, 1844, runs thus:—

"Some time ago we gave a description of the School of Industry, and recommended it to the hearty support of our fellow-citizens, appealing as much to the selfish interest they have in the suppression of juvenile mendicity, with its concomitant crime, as to the love of justice and feelings of humanity.

"In to-day's *Herald* the subject is taken up again by one whose experience of the hardships of poverty have

well qualified him to become the advocate of the orphan boy. Many sixpences, we trust, will follow the perusal of his remarks.

“ If we might be permitted to offer a suggestion to Mr. Sheriff Watson, the promoter and chief supporter of the school by his active and benevolent labour, we would say that now is the time to bring its merits before the community in a more efficient manner than has yet been attempted. A public meeting under the patronage of leading men of all shades of politics, and of any religious creed, their sanction and promise of co-operation being previously obtained, would, we doubt not, lead to the adoption of such measures as would speedily place the institution on a permanent basis. . . .”

The appeal mentioned, written by one well qualified to plead the cause of the orphan boy, is signed W. Thom, and runs thus :—

“ If ‘ guid company,’ which poverty parts, will not heed your grim, old house and the helpless outcasts there, let curiosity plead for one visit. . . .”

“ Nothing in that meagre building to attract, no elegance therein to attract the soft eye of taste, nor atone for prunella spoilt, yet oh ! there is something will some day speak in words of fire, and when that voice goes forth, happy are they and blessed who have looked in sorrowing kindness on yon shreds of bruised humanity.

“ Chilly and forlorn looks the House of Industry, yet that house holds an hundred almost sinless souls in safety.

“ But the other day they were gathered from your lanes and entrys, from perdition to peace, a fountain amidst a desert of souls, a redemption on earth—these snatchings from the Kingdom of Darkness!

“ Go to Chronicle Lane. Look carefully at these sharp, little fellows, and think of your own safety if of nothing else.

“ Look at the fine, rude, raw material here, ready to be manufactured for better, for worse.

“ In these hundred boys, as they are being trained, you have an equivalent for 100 patent locks, forty policemen, two transports, and one hangman.

“ Look at them again, and then turn to that little box, if you have a sigh and a sixpence about you.

“ God bless you!

“ Leave the sixpence, at any rate.”

One day Sheriff Watson, coming out of the Court House, met Miss Elizabeth Ogilvie on her way from the prison. This lady, charitable, gentle, full of good works, was one of the prison visiting committee instituted by Miss Fry.

“ Miss Ogilvie,” said Sheriff Watson, “ I am not speaking slightly of your prison work, but, believe me, there is more profitable labour in preventing young girls from becoming criminals than in labouring in the expectation of converting those hardened to crime.”

Ah, yes! She knew it. But how was it to be done?

“By a female industrial school similar to the boys’ one.”

A few weeks afterwards Miss Ogilvie, along with a few other ladies, called a public meeting in the Royal Hotel to consider the matter.

The meeting was not a large one, but, nowise discouraged, the moving spirits unanimously resolved that a female school of industry should be established. A provisional committee for the purpose of raising subscriptions was formed. This committee zealously worked for about twelve months, but such was the apathy of the public that with its exertions it procured only about £100. With this small sum and great faith the committee, without any ceremony, inaugurated a school on June 5, 1843, in Long Acre.

This school so quickly increased in numbers that it was soon found necessary to move to a more roomy building in Lochside. There, under the superintendence of able teachers and a committee of twenty-four ladies, it flourished until 1846, when religious, or, rather, sectarian discord, caused differences between the Free Church ladies, who had the majority, and the ladies of the Established Church, and led to a split in 1847, making two schools in place of one.

After the boys’ and girls’ schools had been some time in operation, the governor of the prison and the superintendent of the city and rural police reported that juvenile

vagrancy and crime had decreased, but still a considerable number of young beggars infested the streets and gave great annoyance to passengers. They could not be forced to go to school. Sheriff Watson or no one else had power to compel them, and there were not wanting the usual people to point out that the schools (to which they had *not* subscribed) were a delusion, and the intolerable nuisance of vagrant children on the street still existed.

It was plain that another school of a different stamp was required. The attendance at the first two was entirely voluntary, and those wishing admission were obliged to apply; but the children who were now to be dealt with would not apply, preferring the street to wholesome food and instruction.

Sheriff Watson now proposed to the magistrates that they should authorise the police to apprehend every child found begging, and take him to school. He pointed out that there was a warrant under Act of Parliament to apprehend beggars, and he promised to take the responsibility of putting it in force.

The magistrates agreed.

"But as to funds?" they inquired.

"Here are a few pounds," answered the promoter.
"The morrow will provide for itself."

The Soup Kitchen, not in use until the winter months, was put in readiness.

The police received their instructions on Saturday to

apprehend on Monday any begging child, and convey him or her to the Soup Kitchen.

On the morning of May 9, 1845, Sheriff Watson and his friends and co-workers met at the arranged place. Hot water for washing, coffee and bread for breakfast were ready. The Sunday fast had made the children early astir, and they were brought in at so fast and furious a rate that by two o'clock sixty-five were secured.

It was no easy task to get them all washed and fed, for they were unwilling to take off their rags and enter the bath, and most anxious to get at the coffee and bread.

About two o'clock there was a terrible row. Crowds of the halt, the maimed, and the blind appeared at the door of the Soup Kitchen demanding the release of their children. They went away at last, dumfounded at the extraordinary news that their children were at dinner, and would be home early in the evening, after supper.

Before the day was done—and a long, long day it seemed—a sort of mastery was gained over the wild, young creatures, who had never experienced either kindness or discipline before.

They were told that they might come back the next day, if they liked, but whether they liked or not, they would not be allowed to beg.

Before the doors of the Soup Kitchen opened next morning they were all there waiting for admission except four.

As may be imagined, such new methods, such inde-

pendent schemes, did not meet with the approval of the entire community.

“ He makes no friends who never made a foe.”

Impulsive, probably impatient of that discretion which is said (but which nobody believes) to be the better part of valour, a little apt to carry things, as he says himself, “ with the high hand,” doubtless Sheriff Watson had his foes.

And apart from this, Aberdeen and every other town and village in Scotland was simmering and bubbling at this time with suspicion and bitterness and enmity, as well as glowing with zeal and truth and self-sacrifice. The Church question, with the storms it woke, stirred up evil as well as good.

It was a difficult time to live in, especially for a public man with a desire for reform and social improvement.

CHAPTER IX.

William Chambers and the Industrial Schools—Dissension among the lady directors—A secession—Sheriff Watson's School, Skene Street, built—The North Lodge School—Oldmill Reformatory started—Sheriff Watson as the apostle of the movement—Edinburgh apathetic over the scheme—Dundee enthusiastic—Dr. Guthrie takes up the cause in Edinburgh.

EXTRACT from diary of December 22, 1844:—

“ If only I were as much affected by private transgression as by public misrepresentation. . . .

“ May I be enabled to disregard false reports and strengthened to the performance of private goodness.

“ The favour of God is above all human approbation.”

In November, 1845, William Chambers came to Aberdeen, and in the 98th number of “ Chambers's Journal ” published an account of his “ Visit to the Aberdeen School of Industry.”

This journal, read wherever the English language is spoken, published abroad the character, constitution, and working of the schools.

At this time the committee of management of the Female Industrial School, being composed of ladies belonging to both the Free and Established Churches, found

that so great was the want of harmony between the members of the two Presbyterian sects, that they could not work together.

After numerous futile discussions the two parties in the management made up their minds, that it was not possible for them to work together, and the Free Church ladies resolved to secede.

The discord, disappointment, and vexation so affected Sheriff Watson's health that he was obliged to leave home for a short rest. On his return he found two female schools in operation.

The school under Free Church management had left to the other party the building, its furniture, and funds, but owing to their attachment to a teacher had taken with them the greater number of the scholars, and solely on expectation had opened a new school in a temporary lodging, which they had called "Sheriff Watson's School."

They were not disappointed in their hopes. Friends rallied round them, and their first report told of success.

Messrs. Mackenzie and Matthews gave Sheriff Watson a plan for a suitable building, his friends supplied him with funds, and he shortly erected a school in Skene Street at the cost of £700.

The residuary school happily found an able secretary in Robert Farquhar Spottiswoode. It also flourished as the North Lodge School, King Street, and under his care and interest became a useful and excellent institution.

Each school had its own subscribers, but no feeling of enmity existed between them. Mr. Farquhar Spottiswoode and Sheriff Watson were the warmest friends, rivals perhaps in doing good, but not jealous of each other's rivalry.

The Oldmill Reformatory was an offshoot of the House of Refuge, opened in 1836.

Dr. Watt, who had given £1,000 to that institution, intimated his intention to extend the sphere of its usefulness. Mr. Frederick Hill along with Sheriff Watson waited on him to learn his views, when he informed them that he had a wish to buy land in the vicinity of the town, and to erect on it a substantial building. Accordingly, he bought the lands of Oldmill, and conveyed them to the directors of the House of Refuge. But although thus possessed of land, the directors had not at the time funds for building, and the property was let to Sir Alexander Anderson on lease.

Matters remained in this state until September, 1854, when the subscribers to the House of Refuge earnestly recommended immediate steps to be taken for carrying into effect the industrial school, and to that end appointed a committee to inquire and report. The committee reported that the experiment of an industrial feeding school had effected great improvement in the condition of the neglected and destitute youth of the city, and directed the public attention to the principle on which the children of the poor ought to be treated; yet it was obvious that

another element was needed to ensure complete success—namely, compulsory attendance under legislative enactment.

It then recommended that a reformatory and industrial school should be established at Oldmill, not superseding the industrial schools in town, but as an auxiliary to them.

This report, signed by the chairman of the committee, Sheriff Watson, was drawn up by Mr. John Watt, advocate. It was unanimously adopted by the directors.

Plans were obtained for the building, which was completed in 1856, and the institution certified by the Secretary of State as a reformatory school.

That Sheriff Watson took an individual and personal interest in his poor boys and girls is evident from many allusions to them in his letters.

One of the first inmates of the reformatory school seems to have been a little ruffian of the name of Gammie. The Crimean War had excited a warlike spirit among the waifs of society as well as in the circles of the better-bred, and Gammie was a victim to the fighting fever.

He was an expert apparently in every form of mischief, and had taken to himself the name of Lord Raglan, so that he was a hero-worshipper as well.

In an assault (on the Aberdeen Links) on the Russian trenches, Lord Raglan had charged with so much vigour that he was apprehended by the police and fined 10s. by the baillie, with an alternative of ten days' imprisonment

for breach of the peace. The money not being forthcoming, the alternative would have been adopted had not Mr. Thomas Best taken pity on the lad and paid his fine.

He had a sister in the employment of Mr. M'Combie of the *Aberdeen Free Press*, and with great generosity Mr. M'Combie made room for Lord Raglan in his house, and sent him to school.

But the teachers soon gave him summary dismissal, and he turned the heads of the M'Combie children by stories of his wild and imaginary adventures.

“ Mr. M'Combie called on me again to-day ” (so runs a letter) “ about Gammie the irrepressible. ‘ Send him to Oldmill,’ I said; ‘ and if he is reformed, I will have hope of the greatest criminal.’ ”

After some little difficulty with one or two of the directors, Gammie was allowed to enter the school as a voluntary inmate, and Sheriff Watson writes of him: “ Never did any inmate better discharge his duty. He was trusted, and was faithful to his trust.” After a year or two there, he expressed a wish to go to sea, and was bound apprentice to Mr. Thomson on one of his ships bound for Australia.

On arriving there many of the sailors left for the gold diggings, and Gammie was urged to go with them.

“ I said to them, Sheriff,” were his words on his return from the voyage—“ ‘ Na, na; gang to the diggings wha likes. I stick by the ship ’ ”; and the youthful Lord Raglan, it is satisfactory to learn, overcame his early misde-

meanours, rose to be mate in one of the Thomson liners, and a respectable member of society.

Sheriff Watson had now become the apostle of the industrial school, his desire being to plant one in every large town.

“ In 1841,” so he writes in his diary, “ the scheme was thought a wild suggestion, the product of a heated imagination. 1856 sees it a great realization. May it extend more and more, that the whole children of the poor may be brought to a knowledge of God, and be made heirs of the Kingdom.”

As early as 1844 he tried to rouse Edinburgh to a sense of its duties, for though it had hospitals without number, yet it had nothing in the shape of a children’s reformatory, and on his frequent visits there he had been struck by the numbers of vagrant, starving children on the streets of the fairest of cities.

But the sheriffs of Edinburgh did not see their way to take any immediate steps in the desired direction, and he left them in disappointment.

Not so with Dundee. A great public meeting was called for the purpose of hearing his views on the subject. Lord Kinnaird, Sir John Ogilvie, and other influential men took a prominent part, and the “ children’s sheriff,” as he had begun to be called, received an enthusiastic welcome.

The newspapers of the day cited the meeting as being

the most unanimous and enthusiastic of any ever held in the town, and worthy of the occasion.

“ I only knew one face in all that vast assembly,” so runs the diary. “ It was that of Mr. Roger, the portrait-painter, and I looked only at it. It was a jolly, happy face attached to a small, deformed body, and when I saw it lighted up with intelligence and delight, I felt confident and hopeful, and felt I was speaking my best.”

The school in Dundee was opened shortly after this meeting.

One day, in 1846, Sheriff Watson and Dr. Guthrie were travelling on the top of the “ Defiance ” coach to Brechin, having a great deal of talk on the topic of industrial schools. The Sheriff said that in spite of his want of success in Edinburgh he did not give up hope of something being done soon. They did not meet again, nor have further communication on the subject, until after January, 1847, when Dr. Guthrie’s great “ plea ” appeared, which ran through twelve editions in twelve months, which roused Edinburgh from its apathy, and by its passionate eloquence awakened the sympathies of the people. Sheriff Watson was then appealed to by the directors of the new school for a copy of the rules of the institution in Aberdeen, for his opinion as to the allowance of food required, and other particulars regarding the carrying on of the work.

CHAPTER X.

Sheriff Watson in Glasgow—Work in Inverness, Greenock, Dumfries, etc.—Burns's house made an industrial school—The movement in English and Irish towns—Sheriff Watson's pamphlet—Its effect on Jenny Lind—The Sheriff and phonetic spelling—The Denburn School—Visit of W. M. Thackeray to the Aberdeen Industrial Schools.

GLASGOW had awakened to the need of institutions for the education of poor children long before Dr. Guthrie's pamphlet appeared, and in January, 1846, Sheriff Watson writes of Mr. Andrew Liddel, who came to inquire into the success of the system in Aberdeen:—

“ Before calling on me,” he says, “ he had waited on several officials to get their opinion of the schools. Some thought well, some thought ill of them, and he was undecided until he came to a bookstand in Loch Street, opposite the Soup Kitchen, when he asked the bookseller if he was much annoyed by the schoolboys. ‘ Fat ca’ ye annoyed?’ was his reply. ‘ They are the verra plague o’ my life. I canna turn my back but they are playing some pliskie.’

“ ‘ Is it the boys across the street that do that?’

“ ‘ Fat? The Shirrif’s soup kitchen laddies! They nivver fash me. It’s the laddies frae the session squeel roond the corner that bather me.’ ”

“ He says he is determined to get up a school in Glasgow. I told him that Lord Ashley had told me that he had begged in London a whole day for his Ragged School, and had got only £20, when he assured me that that he had only to go out in Glasgow any forenoon with his subscription book, and he might calculate on having £1,000 subscribed before dinner-time.”

Mr. Liddel seems to have calculated on more than he could accomplish, for no more was heard of any movement of the kind in Glasgow until the next year, when a letter from Mr. Wm. Campbell to Sheriff Watson acquainted him with the fact that public interest in Glasgow had been excited regarding the miserable condition of pauper children, by an incident that had recently occurred in Argyle Street one morning before the shops were opened. It was that of three children, the eldest six years old and the youngest seven months, breakfasting on a cold potato, the eldest warming it in his mouth and then feeding the infant, while the child of four looked wistfully on.

The pity awakened by this incident led to a great deal of communication regarding the system in Aberdeen, and ultimately to a public meeting addressed by Sheriff Watson and Mr. Chambers to consider some means for relieving the destitute youth of the city.

The first industrial school was opened in Glasgow on May 31, 1847.

One town after another came under the influence of the light that had first burned as a tiny glimmer in the narrow, poverty-stricken lane in Aberdeen.

Greenock, in 1848, sent a request for Sheriff Watson to come to a public meeting there. The Duke of Argyle presided, and a resolution was carried to form a school after the model of those in the North, with the assistance of their promoter.

Inverness, Falkirk, Rothesay, Ayr, Stranraer, Dumfries followed suit, at all of which places the people cordially received the exponent of the system, and set about the work of collecting subscriptions and opening each its own institution, which was carried on after the Aberdeen method.

Regarding the Dumfries school, which had been largely assisted by Mr. David Steuart, Sheriff Watson speaks in one of his letters thus:—

“ Mr. Steuart has overcome all his difficulties, and the industrial school was opened to-day, March 27, 1848, in the house where Burns died on July 5, 1796 (three months after I was born).”

A letter from Mr. Steuart to Sheriff Watson, dated January, 1852, runs:—

“ Though weighed down with a chest complaint, and

with probably not long to live, I am writing as long as I am able to express once again my great gratitude for your invaluable aid in the work I contemplate with satisfaction as honestly done for our despised fellow-creatures, but not despised by our Heavenly Father."

On the letter is written—"David Steuart died the day after he wrote this."

In August, 1846, the secretary of a committee formed for the purpose of establishing a ragged school in Birmingham, wrote to Sheriff Watson inviting him to address a public meeting there, and stated that they were depending entirely for their manner of setting to work on the information and help they hoped to receive from Aberdeen. From Hull and from Belfast simultaneously there came requests for details as to the working of the industrial school system.

After a visit to Liverpool in 1849 for the purpose of raising interest in a girls' school, Sheriff Watson wrote the pamphlet entitled—"Can Juvenile Vagrancy be prevented? or a Day's Experience among the Ragged Poor of Liverpool."

In August of the next year he received a letter from Mr. Joseph Hubbock, to whose efforts had been largely due the founding of the school in Liverpool, telling him of the success of the girls' school, and adding:—

"I cannot refrain from telling you of a piece of good luck which has befallen us to-day, and for the good luck we are indebted to you. You must know that I keep on

my office table a pile of your pamphlets, and as I have a good many visitors I get all who come in to take the book.

“ Among the many, a gentleman, whose wife is very intimate with Jenny Lind, got a copy. The good wife shewed it to Jenny, and Jenny, like a decent lass, has to-day presented the institution with £100.”

At the present time when the phonetic system is being so widely advocated, when the mother tongue, no less than foreign languages, is taught in this way in so many schools and colleges in America and Europe, it is interesting to know that one of the first places, in this country at least, in which it was ever taught was in that poor district of Aberdeen, known as the Lower Denburn, to a band of ragged and unwashed children in the year 1853.

This Denburn school was an old weaving shop, which had been converted into a Sunday school.

“ I made choice of this locality,” are Sheriff Watson’s words, “ because I could there find the greatest number of untaught children, who only were fit for my purpose, and I had to reject every one who knew the ABC.”

To an intelligent young woman he taught the phonetic system, and she had no sooner opened the school than there came to her a crowd of children, ragged and filthy beyond description, all of whom were admitted if they could pay the penny fee.

A poor woman was asked by the Sheriff how, with her husband confined to bed and unable to work, she had been

able to pay the penny. "Troth, sir," she answered, "I never take any breakfast on Monday morning."

The children were so uncared for, so distressingly unclean, that as we read in his diary, he resorted to bribery in order to effect an improvement. "I told them one day that the next time I returned, and every time I would come with my pockets full of large sugar plums, and would give one to every boy and girl with clean hands and face, and their hair neatly dressed."

"Those shillings," he adds, "could not have been better spent, for by and bye no children but would appear with clean faces and tidy hair."

Upon such material the phonetic method was tested. No lessons were learnt at home, for at home no one could teach them. The progress was so rapid that at the end of a year it was resolved to hold a public examination.

Mr. Ellis, the author of "Phonetic Pronunciation," was asked, and agreed to come. Professor Geddes, Mr. Strachan of Gordon's Hospital, and a few others accompanied him.

Mr. Ellis began to talk to some of the children. He was an Englishman, unused to the Aberdeen dialect. "I cannot understand what they say," and he turned in dismay to the Sheriff.

"Come and hear them read," was the reply.

The highest class book was the "Pilgrim's Progress." From this the pupils now began to read, and when the test

was over, Mr. Ellis, in amazement, exclaimed: "They cannot speak English, but I have never heard it so well read in any school in Scotland."

Professor Geddes was warm in his commendation, and Mr. Strachan declared he should have thought they had been taught for three years instead of one.

"My opinions," so runs his private musing in one day's diary—a day evidently of depression and discouragement—"My opinions are either very much before or behind the age." In this matter of phonetic spelling his opinions were certainly, as we see now, very much in advance.

Among the ventures which were not successful—so far as that it was not found possible to carry them on for want of public support—was the infant asylum, which, in 1854, along with Patrick Keith, then agent for the British Linen Company's Bank, he established in the Castlegate for the children of factory servants working at the Bannermills.

The children were left in charge of a capable woman in the morning before six by their mothers on their way to the mills, the mothers returning at meal times to nurse and feed them, and again in the evening to take them home. It was a great boon to the mothers, who were loud in their praises of the scheme, but the Aberdeen public of that time thought it an unnecessary luxury for the working people, and it was only in existence for a few years.

How those old letters tantalise and fascinate! One

follows, marking as on a piece of tapestry, the main, strong pattern running through them all—help to the children—and tracing, as it were, the stages of the life work, when lo! here is a picture, clear cut and sharp, of quite another texture, and over it one must linger, whether he will or no.

“To-night, into our children’s service, there stepped two ladies, strangers, clad in sombre garments. They sat until my little address was over, and at the end I walked with them to Union Street, and there we parted. They were Lady Franklin and her niece come to Aberdeen to make inquiries about Sir John. Alas, poor ladies!”

In 1856 Thackeray came to Aberdeen to give his lectures on the “Four Georges,” and there is something so characteristic of the great novelist in this account of his visit to the schools that it will stand here as in the diary:—

“I asked him” (Thackeray) “to go to Sugarhouse Lane to see the Juvenile Industrial.

“As a piece of vanity I took with me a volume of his works to shew that the children could read at sight any ordinary book.

“A boy had hardly read a sentence when the great man said fiercely—‘You should not put satirical books into the hands of children.’ ‘People who think so,’ I replied, ‘should not write satirical books.’ The examination continued, but when I attempted to speak to him, he, as I thought at the time, somewhat rudely turned away. I therefore said, ‘There are several more industrial schools,

but they are all conducted on a similar plan, and perhaps you have seen enough.' 'No,' he answered peremptorily, 'I shall see every one of them.' We got into the cab, and on our way to the boys' school the conversation turned on his being a candidate for some vacant borough in England, when he gave me a smart clap on the thigh, saying, 'You are doing more good than all the members of Parliament in Great Britain.'

"We visited the Guestrow school, where he admired the activity of the boys in net-making, and the girls' school, where the girls sang very nicely, and when about to leave it I said, 'There is another school, but it is newly built, and there is nothing old or interesting about it.' He insisted on going, and when we got to 'Sheriff Watson's School' it was the children's dinner hour, and they were all about to assemble in the dining-room. I asked Miss Nicholson, one of the ladies' committee, what the children were to have. 'Peas soup.' 'You should not give them that often,' said Thackeray. 'It is too heating.'

" 'Ah, you don't consider the price of potatoes,' said I.

" 'What!' exclaimed the novelist. 'Are potatoes so dear?'

"Then taking a large bunch of notes from his pocket he handed one to Miss Nicholson, saying, 'That will help to buy some.' He put them back again, and again drew them out and presented another, with, 'Take that also.'

"During dinner at night at my house he laid down his

knife and fork and said to my wife, 'Is it allowable, Mrs. Watson, to sing during dinner, for I cannot get the children's songs out of my head?' Later in the evening he came up to me. 'Sheriff,' he asked, 'did you think I behaved rudely in that school we first visited?'

" 'Well, perhaps—a little.'

" 'If I had attempted to speak, do you know I would have burst out crying like a great lubberly boy.' "

In the year 1860, on the occasion of the Aberdeen advocates adopting a distinctive dress, consisting of a gown and white neckcloth, when addressing the Sheriff from the Bar, an opportunity was taken to present William Watson with an address.

It was read by Mr. Peter Cooper, commencing with compliments to the recipient on his firmness and despatch in conducting legal business. It then dwelt on his friendly relations with members of the Bar, his consideration, and kindness. "We feel," it ran, "that you are not only an upright and impartial judge, but also a kind and warm-hearted man, and we cannot close this address without adverting in a few words to the very eminent position which you have acquired for yourself by the practical application of your experience in criminal jurisprudence to the prevention and diminution of crime. As the originator and founder of that now national institution — the industrial schools—you have earned for yourself, as a benefactor to your country and your race, a reputation of which you have

just cause to be proud, and we believe, although it is not generally known, that the reformatories for juvenile offenders, are also the offspring of your humane and active mind."

CHAPTER XI.

LATER YEARS.

Sorrows—Volunteer Movement—A muddled speech—Retirement—
Edinburgh charities—Memories of youthful days—Brodie, the
sculptor—Charles Winchester—Old Age.

“ I HAVE had many sorrows and many consolations,” so he wrote towards the end of his life.

Between 1857 and 1860 the shadows were deepest, for then he lost two of those dearest to his heart—his wife and son.

The year 1857 witnessed the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny. Both his sons were in the heart of it.

William, his eldest, who distinguished himself at Agra, and afterwards gained credit for his untiring energy and courage in fighting cholera and plague; and John, then a young lieutenant attached to the moveable column commanded by Colonel Greathead.

Young John Watson, along with a brother officer, commanded a detachment of the 2nd Punjaub Infantry at the storming of the Secundrabagh at Lucknow. His friend was killed early in the day, and Watson took command. While leading his Sikhs through the first breach, he was struck by a tulwar and severely wounded on the head.

He recovered sufficiently to leave for home, but return-

ing to his regiment in India before the wound was healed, he died there, far from friends and kindred.

We can well believe that Sheriff Watson was graver and sadder after those years, but his spirit was not quenched, for in his fragmentary diary occur allusions to fresh interests and ventures.

In 1859 he awakened in a few young men—Mackenzie, Edmond, M'Farlane, and one or two others—an interest in the Volunteer movement, then being carried on with energy in Edinburgh, with the result that one evening in his house in Dee Street these gentlemen formed themselves into a Volunteer Rifle Association, and set about adding to their number.

The success of the Volunteer movement in Aberdeen, and Sheriff Watson's part in it, has been fully recorded in Mr. Donald Sinclair's "Aberdeen Volunteers."

It was to be expected that in mingling with the public life of Aberdeen, the Sheriff would often have to take a leading place. Such a place was not always to his mind, and his public speaking was not always successful.

Thus he writes under date January, 1864:—

"Dined in the Town Hall, the Provost and Magistrates having given a dinner to the Trades, and invited some county gentlemen and the heads of departments in town. I had to propose the health of Mr. Irvine of Drum, a convener of the county. I had prepared myself by reading the article 'Drumoak' in the last Statistical Account, but I got

muddled and made a mess of my speech. However, there were a great many bad ones, and mine could only be said to have been like the rest. It was a dull, stupid affair, and I left early, resolving never to subject myself to a like infiction again."

Among his letters are several from the Duchess of Gordon, which exhibit in a striking manner a most excellent and charitable character.

When at Huntly on circuit the Sheriff had frequently visited her Memorial Schools, and in later years he assisted her in establishing a girls' school on the model of those in Aberdeen.

"She has the real interests of the poor at heart," so he wrote of the lady, "and my visits to Huntly Lodge are always a pleasure."

He retired from his post as Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeenshire in 1866.

It was at Norton, in Midlothian, the property of his brother, that the greater number of his latter years were spent. His son was in India, and his only daughter had married a son of the Rev. Henry Angus of Aberdeen.

For some years he had great pleasure in the companionship of his son's wife, who travelled with him from town to town on his visits to the different industrial schools and reformatories recently established throughout the country.

His leisure, while his strength remained, was filled with activities. In many of the educational and benevolent

schemes of the day he took his full share of labour, sometimes in attempting to engraft newer methods on to old institutions, sometimes in awakening popular interest in what he considered necessitous charities.

Of the first, the Lancasterian School in Edinburgh, of which he became a director, came to have a large portion of his time.

This school, originally established under distinguished patronage in 1810, on the plan of teaching recommended by Joseph Lancaster, was for the purpose of imparting, at the least expense of time and money, the advantages of a good education to a class of the community which otherwise might not enjoy them. It had a long career of usefulness, until its ultimate amalgamation in 1873 with George Heriot's Hospital.

The teachers, from the time when Sheriff Watson became a director, adopted the phonetic system, which he so strongly recommended, in the infant department, and also made use of his series of simple and instructive lessons, instead of what he called "the trash" to be found in most infant school books.

The shoe-blackening brigade was one of the schemes of his later years. As chairman of a meeting called in Edinburgh to consider the condition of the shoe-blackening boys, he awakened an interest in this somewhat unsatisfactory profession, with the result that a certain number of lads were assisted into better paid and more hopeful careers.

At the Social Science Congress in Glasgow in 1874 he was associated with Mary Carpenter in laying before the congress his views on the subject of ragged and industrial schools.

As the years went on he wrote fewer pamphlets, and took a less active part on committees, although there never came a time when he ceased to interest himself in the claims of the poor children.

The Greek Testament and Sir Walter Scott were the solace of his somewhat lonely later years.

He spoke often of the morning of his life among the southern uplands, of his father and mother, and of old Peg Dymock, his nurse, who taught him the catechism, and knew almost all the Bible by heart; of the tipsy parish schoolmaster and the tricks played on him by the boys; of happy days spent with his kindred in Edinburgh houses; with his mother's uncle in Queen Street; Robert Stodart, the inventor of the pianoforte; or with John Braidfute, the bookseller, the friend of De Quincey and of Christopher North; of youthful ventures on Tweed and Gala; of sudden floods and narrow escapes.

He used to tell a tale his grandmother told him. It was of how one morning a stranger knocked at the door of their farmhouse, "The Bank." It was a summer morning, and the lads and lasses were all away at the haymaking.

"I was reddin' up," were the words she had used, "so the stranger lad gaed in aboot the garden and set him doon,

and when I came oot bye with the whisky he was singing away rail blythe.”

“ ‘ Ye’ll be a rhymin’ billy,’ said I.

“ ‘ They call me Robbie Burns,’ said he.

“ ‘ Weel, I wad like fine to see mysel’ in print. Ye’ll maybe mak’ a bit verse on Jean Stodart, but no till I get my Sabbath goon on.’ ”

Alas, the poet did not pass that way again, and Jean Stodart never saw herself in print.

I can remember clearly, although all the circumstances are blurred and faint, this much : A room in firelight, with branches of trees swaying outside, and my grandfather saying sadly—

“ My old friend Brodie is gone.”

The other day I found among his papers these lines referring to the well-known sculptor :—

“ I was told yesterday that a bust of me was in Hay’s shop. I said it could not be, as I had never sat for my bust, but there it is, the work of a man named Brodie employed at the Broadford Works. I sent him a message to call, and he has just done so. I asked him how he caught the likeness, and he said he had met me at James Simpson’s working men’s meetings and when I came out of the West Church. He says that one day when he was looking at me, I looked at him, and he said to his wife—‘ He sees me now.’ ”

Another reference is this:—

“ I have got Brodie to include the hands. I told Lord Cockburn about his great genius, and that he wished to become a sculptor, and Cockburn said — ‘ For goodness sake, Watson, not that. He will never make salt to his kail.’ ”

And the last:—

“ Brodie has gone to Rome. It was worth while sending him, for I am sure he will succeed.”

The scent of boxwood always brings to mind a summer's day in an old, walled garden, where the chief things remembered are red and yellow snapdragon and a mossy sun dial. Standing by the dial, stooping a little, but tall and handsome still, my grandfather spoke to himself of “ a banquet hall deserted.”

“ I felt like one who treads alone some banquet hall deserted.”

He may have been thinking over what he had written to a friend of a visit he had lately paid to Aberdeen.

“ I saw,” he wrote, “ a few of my old friends. Alexander Stronach and William Adam, both older than I am, are still at work. Charles Chalmers is gone, and John Angus and Newel Burnett.

“ The last I called for was Charles Winchester. He was seated in an armchair, with writing materials before him. When I went in, he looked up and said, ‘ Well?’ I repeated, ‘ Well?’ When he started up, took hold of

both my hands, crying out—‘ God bless me, Sheriff. I am glad to see you ! ’ ”

“ We sat down and had a chat, and he told me he had written a tragedy, and that he would be proud if I would accept a copy.

“ He wrote on it—‘ To William Watson, Esq., a very esteemed friend, from the author of this tragedy, with much affection and regard.—Charles Winchester, aetat suo 96.’ ”

The last fragment is this, written in 1878—

“ I am occupying myself in writing on the pauperism of Aberdeen since 1840, and to that end have been collecting statistics.

“ My health is good, my mind not much impaired.

“ Old age I find no ways unpleasant. I bless God for His care. Would that I might learn to love Him with all my soul and my neighbour as myself.”

A stone of granite in the churchyard of Liberton Parish Church bears the inscription—

WILLIAM WATSON,

Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeenshire.

Founder of Industrial Schools.

*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these
my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*

The needs of men change, institutions lose their usefulness, other forms take their place.

It may be well to know something of the lives of men who did good in their day, whose aims were unworldly and sincere, and, above all, who had in their hearts that flame of charity, without which Saint Paul says—

“ Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, it profiteth me nothing.”

INDEX

INDEX

- Aberdeen in 1829, 17; its social life in 1840, 31.
Aberdeen Herald and the Industrial Schools, 60.
Aberdeen Philosophical Society in the Lemon Tree Inn, 30.
Advocates of Aberdeen in 1829, 17, 19; they present Sheriff Watson
with an address, 1860, 83.
Amusement, Want of, in Aberdeen on holidays, 20.
Ayr resolves to institute an Industrial School, 76.
- Bain, Professor : his character, 42.
Belfast and the Industrial School system, 77.
Best, Thomas, head of an attractive Aberdeen family, 18.
Birmingham resolves to institute an Industrial School, 77.
Blackie, John Stuart : his character in Aberdeen, 41.
Blaikie, Provost : his character, 17; his sudden death, 18.
Braidfute's Edinburgh book shop and its frequenters, 11.
Brodie, sculptor, and Sheriff Watson's bust, 90.
Burnett, Thomas, a polite and agreeable Aberdonian, 18.
Byron, Lord, public excitement on publication of his poems, 8.
- Carlyle, Jane Welsh, her friendship for Edward Irving, 12; her
early correspondence with Carlyle, 13.
Carlyle, Thomas, his conversation in Edinburgh society, 12; his
early correspondence with Jane Welsh, 13.
Carnwath Church and its "jougs," 2.
Chambers, William, of *Chambers's Journal*, and the Industrial
Schools, 67; addresses a meeting in Glasgow with Sheriff
Watson, 75.

Cholera in Aberdeen, 24, 25.

Clare, John, the poet, and his books, 38.

Cockburn, Lord, as an orator and lawyer, 15; visits the first Industrial School in Aberdeen, 60.

Cooper, P., advocate, presents address to Sheriff Watson, 83.

Corn Laws controversy, 45.

Crombie, Alexander, an entertaining Aberdonian, 18.

Davidson, Duncan, advocate, an astute Aberdonian, 18.

Davidson, Rev. Dr., West Church, as a preacher, 48.

Disruption Movement in Aberdeen, 42.

Dumfries resolves to institute an Industrial School, 76.

Dunbar, Rev. Sir W., S. Paul's, excommunicated, 44.

Dundee enthusiastic over Juvenile reform, 72.

Edinburgh apathetic over Juvenile reform, 72; roused by Dr. Guthrie, 73.

Edinburgh High School in 1808, 6.

Edinburgh legal office routine a century ago, 7.

Eldon, Lord, mystified by Miss Stirling Graham, 9; his ability as a lawyer, 14.

Esquimaux visitor in Aberdeen and Scots festivities, 35.

Falkirk resolves to institute an Industrial School, 76.

Farquharson, of Haughton, and his impoverished estate, 54.

Forsyth, Rev. Dr., of Belhelvie, inventor of the percussion lock, 32.

Franklin, Lady, at the children's services, 81.

French invasion scare in Napoleonic days, 3.

Fry, Elizabeth, in Aberdeen, 23.

Gammie ("Lord Raglan"), a noted Aberdeen waif, reclaimed, 70.

Glasgow and the Industrial Schools system, 74.

Greenock resolves to institute an Industrial School, 76.

Gordon, Duchess of, her interest in the children, 87.

Gordon, Duke of, his statue in Aberdeen unveiled, 55.

Gordon, Hon. Capt., M.P. for Aberdeenshire, 19.

Gordon, James, of Craig, as counsel in Parliament House, 13; instrumental in the appointment of Watson as Sheriff of Aberdeen, 16; opposes Poor Law reform, 22.

House of Refuge opened in Aberdeen, 25, 27; its success in 1841, 58.
Hull and the Industrial Schools system, 77.

Industrial Schools, first one opened, 59; Female School opened, 63; split in the management, 63, 68; compulsion to be used in regard to them, 64.

Infant Asylum started in Aberdeen, 80.

Inverness resolves to institute Industrial School, 76.

Irving, Edward, his friendship for Jane Welsh, 13; his quality as a preacher, *ibid.*

Jeffrey, Lord, and Miss Stirling Graham's mystifications, 9; his cleverness at the bar, 15; a quaint story of his handwriting, *ibid.*

"Lee Penny" as a cure for whooping cough, 4.

Leslie, Hugh, of Powis, and his supper party, 32.

Lind, Jenny, her generosity for the children, 78.

Liverpool and its successful Industrial Schools, 77.

M'Combie, William, of the *Free Press*, and a noted waif, 71.

North Lodge School started, 68.

Ogilvie, Elizabeth, and the Female Industrial School, 62.

Oldmill Reformatory opened, 69, 70.

Parliamentary election, 1841, in Aberdeen, 46.

Phonetic system of teaching instituted by Sheriff Watson, 78.

Phrenology as a study of Sheriff Watson's, 13; observations on an Aberdeen citizen, 18.

Poaching in rural Scotland in the eighteenth century, 2.

Poor Laws, opposition in Aberdeen to reform, 22.

Prison reform, 21, 24.

Professors in Old Aberdeen, their sluggishness, 34.

Resurrectionists in Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century, 6.

Roman Catholicism, feeling against, in Aberdeen, 27.

Ross, Capt., of Rossie, as Whig candidate for Aberdeen, 19; his reception at Bridge of Dee, 20.

Scott, Sir Walter, reception of his novels in Edinburgh, 8.

Shipbuilding, iron, begun in Aberdeen, 36.

Sinclair, Donald, his "Aberdeen Volunteers," 86.

Small Debt Courts, their quality in Scotland, 55.

Spottiswoode, R. F., and the North Lodge School, 68.

Storie, Andrew, W.S., and his methods with apprentices, 7.

Stranraer resolves to institute an Industrial School, 76.

Tarland, a law-loving district, 40; an extremely poor district in the 'forties, *ibid.*

Thackeray, W. M., his lecturing visit to Aberdeen, 81; taken round the Industrial Schools, *ibid.*; his touching interest in the work, 82.

Thom, W., the "Inverury Poet," and the first Industrial School, 61.

Thomson, of Banchory, opposes Poor Law reform, 22.

Vaccination for smallpox in Sheriff Watson's boyhood, 3.

Victoria, Queen, celebrations in Aberdeen on her wedding, 34.

Volunteer Movement in 1859 started in Aberdeen by Sheriff Watson, 86.

- Watson, Sheriff, born in Lanarkshire, 1; education completed in Edinburgh, 5; apprenticed to the law, 7; commissioned W.S., 10; appointed Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen, 16; his marriage, *ibid.*; his politics, 19; interest in prison reform, 21; advocates Poor Law reform, 22; habits of early rising, 30; his views on Scottish music, 41; on Unitarianism, 52; his skilful facility in Court, 55; opens his first Industrial School, 59; urges compulsory powers against juvenile begging, 64; his personal interest in the children, 70; acknowledged as the Apostle of the Industrial School, 72; visits to Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow, etc., 72 *et seq.*; writes his pamphlet, "Can Juvenile Vagrancy be prevented?" 77; advocates the phonetic system, 78; presented with an address by the Aberdeen advocates, 83; family bereavements, 85; starts volunteer movement in 1859, 86; retires from Sheriffship, 87; later years in Midlothian, 87 *et seq.*
- Watt, Dr., his benefaction for the Aberdeen House of Refuge, 25; for Oldmill Reformatory, 69.
- Winchester, Charles, advocate, his friendship for Sheriff Watson.

